

The Rothschild's

A Fable with Some Facts



Some St. Louis Rothschild's and extended family-September 8, 2024

Around 11:00 am, Saturday, September 7, 2024, at Congregation Shaare Emeth Temple in St. Louis, Missouri, Lucas Lazarus, the son of Todd and Julie Lazarus, the grandson of Louie and Margie Lazarus and Harvey and Nancy Lehrer, had his Bar-Mitzvah. Some of the Rothschild family tree, all descendants of Rothschilds, Pukatz's, Goodman's, Steinschneider's, Kutcher's and Kranzberg's convened in St. Louis, and told stories of the family's history.

What follows is an attempt to tell some of the story of one branch of this immigrant family. A prolific, far-flung family, all of whom can trace their origins to Poland at the turn of the twentieth century. The stories behind this story were related to me at a family picnic. At the picnic table, all family members strived to speak at once, and each had their own version of events. I scribbled notes as fast as I could. I'm sure I missed important details and misrepresented others. And, since not all of the family was

present, not every point of view was represented. As is the practice in 2024 America, there was little fact-checking. I did check the dates against world history and the history of Jews in Poland¹ If there was a discrepancy in stories I defaulted to the one that I felt reflected the character of the individual. Or that made me laugh.

*This piece is not meant to be an academic history of the Rothschilds, nor is it journalism. The goal in compiling this narrative was to **relate some of the history** of the Rothschilds, while **capturing most the spirit** of the Rothschild's. The hope is that the new generation of Rothschild's, and generations to come, will read the story and garner an idea of their ancestors and how they lived.*

This could be the story of all immigrant families. Families with surnames like Lazarus, Lehrers, Kranzberg, O'Brien, Mushroe, Timmerman, Hollenbach, but also Fernandez, Chang, Gonzales, Sic-huh, Rodriguez and more, all of whom succeeded against insurmountable odds and incredible hardships to create a country greater than the one they had fled.² To create a better future for their children.

Immigrant families whom have family histories unique to them, but mirror that of the Rothschilds.

Immigrant families that are the fabric of our nation.

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Rabbi Jacob Rothschild and his wife Hannah (nee Pukatz) were raising a big family in Kielcz, Poland ³ in the early 1900s. The family was dirt poor, with six children to feed, (Molly, Leonard, Rose, Muarry, Sam, Florence)⁴ and barely getting by in a country that had not yet recovered from the ravage of the first world war.

Kielcz, Poland was a particularly dangerous place for the Rothschilds. A new war had broke out between Poland and Russia, and both sides were targeting Jews. Poland

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_20th-century_Poland

² Credit to Roz Huntley for this line.

³ Jacob and Hannah were originally from Warsaw. They moved to Kielcz in about 1917

⁴ A seventh child, Raymond, was born in the US.

was outraged that some in the Jewish community had supported the Bolsheviks. Russia was angry that some in the Jewish community favored an independent Poland.

By 1919, over 200 pogroms had been launched against the Jewish community from both sides. Over 30,000 Jews had been executed directly, and over 150,000 had died from injuries, persecution or detainment.

Jews began to leave Poland in great numbers. Many Jews left simply because they did not want to live in a communist country. Others did not wish to rebuild their lives in a place where their families were murdered, persecuted or incarcerated. Some were just afraid. Since independent Poland in 1919 was the only Eastern Bloc country to allow free Jewish aliyah, without visas or exit permits, there was a way out. But that door appeared to be closing. The Russians were coming.

The United States, New York City in particular, was the most sought out place for Polish Jews to emigrate. President Woodrow Wilson had been made aware of the pogroms thanks to the Jewish Business community in the United States. In response, Wilson facilitated Jewish emigration with a series of explicit clauses at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.

Against this backdrop, Hannah set her sites on moving her family to the United States and New York City. With the Statue of Liberty in the harbor, a welcoming President in office and 1,600,000 Jews already living in New York (517,000 in Brooklyn alone), it seemed the logical destination.

However, Jacob was hesitant to move; Poland was his homeland. But after Russian soldiers showed up to conscript Jacob's and Hannah's older sons, saved only (according to family lore)⁵ by the quick actions of their oldest daughter Molly, who hid them under a wagon, Hannah put her foot down. It was time to go. So in late 1919, the Rothschild's set out for New York City and the United States of America.

Start spreading the news, the Rothschild's are leaving today. They want to be a part of it, New York, New York. ⁶

⁵ This is disputed by some of the family.

⁶ Some of the family claim that Jacob and Molly came to the US first, and attempted, without success, to put down roots in an Orthodox Jewish community in Benton Harbor, Michigan.

But, of course, there was a complication. On arriving in Antwerp, Belgium, and booking passage on a ship to the States, immigration officials determined that the Rothschild's son, Sam, had a contagious eye disease (probably 'pink eye') and would not be allowed to travel with the rest of the family. For the sake of the rest of the family, Sam had to be left behind. Hannah faced a real life 'Sophie's Choice'; does the family return to Kielcz, or is Sam left behind?

Thankfully, a Catholic family stepped forward and offered to house and care for six year old Samuel until he was cleared to travel. The thought was the eye infection would clear up soon and Sam would be on his way. However, it turned out to be five years before the Rothschild's acquired the necessary resources to send for Sam.

Sam put the time in Belgium to good use. He was the top student in class and became fluent in seven languages (English, Yiddish, Hebrew, French, Flemish, German and Russian). Finally, in 1924, the family sent for their son. Sam, now eleven years old and fit to travel, boarded a boat, and made the trip across the ocean. He arrived at Ellis Island unaccompanied where he was met by his mom. According to family lore, Hannah saw the long lines at the point of entry and, fearing another incident like in Antwerp, hustled Sam out of the line and home for a reunion with his family (and to meet his youngest brother Raymond, who had been born in the interim). Thus it appears that Samuel Rothschild probably entered the US in 1924 as an illegal immigrant. No records exist of Samuel Rothschild ever coming thru Ellis Island.

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At the same time the Rothschilds were planning their escape to New York, Samuel Goodman⁷ and his wife Kayla (nee Steinschneider) and four daughters (Sarah, Mildred, Rose and Evelyn) were living in Kremenetz, Poland. However, unlike the dirt poor Rothschilds, Samuel and Kayla owned a successful dry goods store. They were doing well, even prosperous, given the standards of the day. They were, or thought they were, in the mainstream of Polish society. They belonged to the Jewish Merchant Association, which appeared to offer some protection from the escalating persecution. So they procrastinated. It was not until 1926 that the Goodman's decided to escape to the United States.

⁷ Some of the family say this name was spelled Gutman or Gitman.

But not to New York. Belleville, Illinois, just south of St. Louis, Missouri, was the Goodman's destination.

Kayla's family members (the Steinschneiders) had previously immigrated and settled in Belleville in the late 1800s and were willing to sponsor the Goodman family. However, since there was still a profitable store to run in Kremenetz, Samuel and Kayla decided to send their daughters first; they would stay back in Kremenetz to mind the store. So, in 1926, Sarah, married to Sam Kuchar and with a daughter named Shirley, traveled with Mildred, Rose and Evelyn to Belleville, Illinois to stay with the Steinschneiders.

In 1931, Samuel and Kayla, reunited with their daughters, son-in-law and granddaughter Shirley in Belleville, Illinois. Shirley would grow up to marry Mel Kranzberg. The Mel and Shirley Kranzberg union begat Margie and Cindy. Margie Kranzberg would marry Louie Lazarus. The Margie and Louie union begat Todd Lazarus. Todd Lazarus would marry Julie Lehrer, that union begat Lucas and Zoe. As noted previously, the family is prolific, with many branches. There is a lot of begetting.

Lucas is the boy whom is being Bar-Mitzvahed as this story begins. Got that? But I digress.

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By late 1942, the Rothschild/Pukatz family had established roots in New York City and the Goodman/Steinschneider/Kutcher family had found a home in Belleville, Illinois.⁸ But the country was still reeling from the effects of the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II was raging.

Sam Rothschild, the kid with the 'pink eye,' now 26 years old, was living with his family in New York while working in his sister Molly's women's clothing store. The military draft had started and the US was offering 'free' training in the trades to encourage men to enlist before they were drafted, Knowing it was inevitable that he would be drafted, Sam jumped at the offer (apparently being a sales clerk in his sister's clothing store

⁸ Sam Kutcher got a job and moved to Carbondale, Illinois shortly after arriving. The Steinschneider house in Belleville was too crowded.

was not very appealing) and signed up, training to be an X-Ray technician. But in the spring of '44, as the war heats up, the military scraps the training program, discharges Sam, and sends him home. He is drafted into the army four weeks later and reports to Fort Dix, New Jersey for basic training.

Upon completion, Sam is assigned to Jefferson Barracks Army Base in Missouri, where he trains as a medic and is told to 'get his affairs in order'; he was being deployed to the Philippines. In early October '44 Sam attends a USO dance in nearby St. Louis. At this dance, Sam Rothschild, the 5th child of Jacob and Hannah Rothschild meets Evelyn, the youngest child of Samuel and Kayla Goodman. Evelyn goes home that night and tells her mother that she has met the man she plans to marry.

The marriage takes place six weeks later, November 15, 1944.

In February 1945, Sam and Evelyn drive to San Diego, California, (where Sam would board the troop ship) and find an apartment for Evelyn to live until Sam returned. Evelyn, now pregnant, takes a job in a bakery. The war in the Pacific ends on September 2, 1945.⁹ Sam is discharged, returns to California, picks up Evelyn and drives back to St. Louis. By then, Evelyn's mom Kayla and her sister Mildred have moved to a small apartment on Edsel Avenue on the North side of the city. Sam and Evelyn move in with them; there was no place else to go for the young couple.

With a pregnant wife, no money, no job and living with his mother-in-law and her sister, Sam starts selling appliances with his friend, Mel Kranzberg. Sam had met Mel's brother in the Philippines, and coincidentally, Mel happened to be married to Evelyn's niece. The store was called *Ready Credit Appliance*, where an appliance could be bought for "a dollar down and a dollar when I catch up with you." Sam was the collector, the person who caught up with the customer whom owed the dollar.

More children came along. Sam and Evelyn's first child, Michael, is born on November 30, 1945. Daughters Roz (5/21/47), Joyce (10/6/48) and son David, (11/28/50) come shortly thereafter. With eight people now sharing that small apartment on Edsel Ave, Sam's mother-in-law has had enough. She tells Sam that he needs to move out and find a home of his own for his growing family.

Sam finds and buys a home in a then rural area about twenty miles from St. Louis. His mom and sister-in-law discourage the purchase of a home so far away from the city.

⁹ "The only good day of the war" Sam tells David

“Nobody will come visit you” they tell him. Sam persists, and his family settles to Creve Coeur, Missouri. Two more children come along, Mark (6/3/54) and Tina (4/27/56). By 1960, Sam and Evelyn and their six children are now living in a three bedroom, one bathroom home in rural St. Louis County. Space was tight. According to family lore, Tina, the youngest daughter, slept in the bottom drawer of a chest of drawers in her sister’s room.¹⁰

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The next sixty years went by in a blur for the Rothschild family.

During the '60's, Sam, always the merchant, opened up three cash-only businesses; an ice cream parlor, a radiator repair shop and a battery store, all in poor areas of north St. Louis. Learning that he could not be in three places at one time (and that when he is away cash turns up missing) he sells the ice cream shop and the radiator repair store. He keeps the battery store. He calls it *\$5 Battery Company*, a marketing nod to “a dollar down and a dollar when I catch up with you.” The store is successful.

In 1969 Sam and Evelyn take their first trip since 1944 to Colorado. Sam, although worried that the store will go out of business while he’s away, puts 19-year old David in charge. According to David, “it was the best two weeks the store ever had.”¹¹

In 1969, Sam and Evelyn, concerned about the social unrest in the country, the war in Vietnam, and the general chaos in the US, sell the battery store, the house in Creve Coeur and move to Toronto, Canada with their two youngest children, Mark and Tina. By that time their oldest son Michael had graduated college and was working at IBM as a computer programmer. Daughter Roz was finishing up a journalism degree at the University of Missouri, daughter Joyce was attending the University of Illinois. David, like his Dad in '44, enlisted in the army ahead of being drafted to Vietnam and was serving stateside. According to family lore, when David was discharged, he returned to St. Louis to find that the family home had been sold, his family had moved to Canada, and that all his possessions were gone. David could catch up with the family later in Toronto. He did, arriving in Toronto in '72.

¹⁰ Tina vehemently denies that she ever slept in a chest of drawers.

¹¹ Some in the family claim much of what is attributed to David are “bubba manza’s” (a grandmother’s tale), or an exaggeration.

In 1975, tired of the cold weather, Sam and Evelyn retire to St. Petersburg, Florida. In keeping with the Rothschild family precedent of “it’s ok to leave a child behind”¹² they left David, Mark and Tina behind. David would be in charge of his siblings like when he ran the battery store in '67. Perhaps Sam and Evelyn would send for them later...

By the 2000s all of the children of Sam and Evelyn Rothschild were independent and successful. All had attended college, and all but David, a veteran, were college graduates. Michael’s career took him to NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association). Roz settled in Michigan, and had a successful career as an HR professional. Joyce became a sociology professor at many universities, eventually retiring from Virginia Tech. David, a merchant like his father, opened up a car rental agency in Toronto, then managed “Dan’s Fan City” in Tampa Florida. Mark graduated college from York University in Toronto and owns a promotional business in St. Louis. Mark also has a daughter living in New Jersey, eight grandchildren, one great grandchild and another on the way.

Tina Rothschild, Sam and Evelyn’s youngest, the girl who slept in the chest of drawers, graduated Washington University Law School, and worked as an attorney for the NLRB and the UAW. Tina has two sons from her first marriage to Mitch O’Brien. Dustin, born in 1979 (a graduate of Vanderbilt University and an IT executive at CVS) married Amy Timmermann and have two children, Lachlan and Mackenzie. They live in Texas. Daniel born in 1983, (a graduate of Albion University and director of Bioinformatics at the Mayo Clinic) married Katie Mushroe and also have two children, Liam and Lily. They live in Rochester, Minnesota. Tina married the noble grocer Tim Hollenbach in 2010. By 2024, Tina and Tim have six children between them, and six grandchildren. Another grandson is on the way.

Evelyn Rothschild passed away on 12/27/2002. Evelyn had never disclosed her age to anyone, and on her gravestone there is not a birthdate, only the inscription “Young at Heart.”

Sam Rothschild passed away on 3/30/2015, one week shy of his 102nd birthday. A mensch to the end, he had discussed the inner workings of the new Apple operating system with his son-in-law Tim Hollenbach about three months prior to his passing.

¹² Tina also claims she was left behind by her parents at a Lou Fusz car dealership when she was about three years old. The rest of the family corroborates this claim.

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It's the first week of September 2024, in Rochester Minnesota. Liam and Lily O'Brien, 5th generation Rothschild's have had a hectic week.

Liam started his freshman year of high school and had cross-country practice. Lily started junior high at a new school, competed in a water skiing show and attended gymnastics practice. Then on Friday afternoon, after the kids got out of school, the family got in their car and made the eight hour drive to St. Louis for cousin Lucas's Bar-Mitzvah and the Rothschild reunion.

The rest of the family was also busy. Michael and wife Beverly were flying in from Washington DC. Roz and husband Rick were driving in from Michigan. Joyce and husband Roger were driving from Virginia. David was flying in from Tampa, Tina and Tim were driving up from Texas. Only Mark was still in St. Louis; he was working at the Jewish Holocaust Museum where he volunteers as a docent.

The soon to be Bar-Mitzvahed boy Lucas Lazarus, a 6th generation Goodman was making last minute prep, being helped by his sister Zoe and his grandparents, Harvey¹³ and Nancy Lehrer. Lucas and Zoe's parents, Todd and Julie Lazarus, were putting finishing touches on the words they planned to speak at the Bar-Mitzvah as well as working and planning the before and after parties.

Margie Lazarus, grandmother of Lucas, was running around like a chicken with it's head cutoff, helping with the planning for the Bar-Mitzvah and doing all of the planning for the reunion.

Saturday, September 7, 2024, was going to be very special day.

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That's all I'm sayin'

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¹³ Harvey and the author of this fable, Tim Hollenbach, met for breakfast on Monday, September 9, '24 and solved most of the world's problems. Unfortunately, nobody listened to them.