

Two Baltic Families Who Came to America The Jacobsons and the Kruskals, 1870–1970

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For a century at least they had lived in the region which drained northward, into the Baltic Sea. And for as long as they could remember they had lived in and around Zagare, a town of two or three thousand located on the border between Latvia and Lithuania, in the midst of the fertile and productive plains of Courland. The countryside was largely controlled by German-speaking gentry, descendants of medieval Teutonic conquerors, the survivors of conquests by Danes and Poles as well as Swedes and Russians. On their manorial estates they produced grain and cattle in abundance. In the towns, the majority of them small like Zagare, the commerce generated by agriculture flourished. Trading cattle and grain, leather, tallow, flour—these, and the hundreds of everyday consumer goods connected with the lives of farmers and townsmen—brooms and buttons, scissors and scythes, muslin and gabardine—trading and the manufactures of dozens of artisans were the principal functions of towns like Zagare.

For the Jews of such a town, living in the prescribed ghetto, and cut off from social intercourse with the Lutherans who dominated both town and countryside, life focussed on the Jewish religion and Jewish culture. Surrounded by a society which was at best indifferent and sometimes unexpectedly, alarmingly, cruel, looking inward had become deeply ingrained into their custom and culture. Religion, moreover, reinforced this desire to look inward and backward to their past. For the days of glory were in ancient Jerusalem, and the rules for life had been set down during the centuries by sages now dead. Outsiders, *goyim*, possessed little intrinsic value or interest,

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and the present day, always a time of mediocrity, was best spent in studying the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud, the distilled wisdom of God and His people.

Backward, introverted, conservative in their outlook, the Jews of Zagare, Krettingen, and similar towns—the Bermans, Gordons, Jaches, Jacobsons, Jaffes, Kruskals, Mandelstamms, Milwitzkys, Piroshes, Trubeks, and the rest—had centered their lives within their families and within their religion, generation after generation, for centuries.¹ In 1870, there was little reason for any of them to believe that the future promised anything very different from the past. One after another the centuries had rolled by in the life of their people, yet still their religion and their families, so painstakingly nurtured, remained intact. Since they believed that the past was the best guide to the future, who could anticipate the revolution they would soon, unwittingly, initiate?

It was a revolution, a social revolution. By 1970, these families which had known each other for centuries, and mixed their blood, had become strangers to one another. A majority of their children had married Gentiles, and among the few who still practiced any religion at all, liberal Christianity was as common as liberal Judaism. Among the whole lot, scores of them, there was not a single rabbi, though there was at least one Protestant clergyman. Most astounding of all—from the viewpoint of 1870—these descendants were scarcely conscious, let alone remorseful, regarding this radical and historic transformation. Individualists in a world of individualism, they accepted their separation from the world of Zagare cheerfully, unconsciously.² They lived in a different world.

¹ Miriam Jacobson Kruskal, *Letters and Memoirs*, August, 1969 (hereafter cited as *MJK, Letters and Memoirs*). This study is primarily based on the recollections of MJK who patiently answered questions and who spent many hours probing her memory to recall and record events, both happy and sad. Her own writings, together with the other material on which this study rests, are in the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio. The author thanks the following scholars for reading and criticizing earlier versions: Irene Quenzler Brown, Arthur A. Goren, Oscar Handlin, Daniel Horowitz, and Helen L. Horowitz.

² These assertions are based on information supplied on the Family Data Questionnaire prepared by the author and distributed by MJK to family members in the spring of 1970.

This transformation was as dramatic as it was unpredictable. But how had it come about? Why, after a century or more of relative stability, was there a new diaspora, and why had it shattered traditional ways? The old ways had not been fragile; they had endured the test of centuries. And no one had envisioned the new pattern, much less attempted consciously to create it. Yet within a single century, a span of four generations, the revolution was complete. How it came about, and why, is a mystery which demands explanation.

At the most general level, where the bold outlines of large social forces are visible, scholars have long since unraveled the mystery. The Russian Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century was caught in the throes both of a welter of awakening nationalisms and of the industrial revolution. Together they generated powerful forces which propelled hundreds of thousands of Jews into Western Europe, South Africa, and the Americas, especially North America, where the expanding economy and open society of the United States made it most accessible despite its distance. Here, in a fluid, heterogeneous society, both the possibilities and the incentives for assimilation were numerous and alluring. As a result tradition lost its grip and was abandoned. The distinctive identity of centuries eroded and decayed.

For many purposes such a brief, short-hand explanation is sufficient. But it is also so abstract and general that at the level of families and individuals, it loses all meaning. Although this general explanation describes factors which bear on the behavior of individuals, it can neither account for personal decisions nor explain the complex patterns of intra-family behavior which lie at the root of individual motivation. The generalizations provide little help in understanding the actual people who voluntarily participated in the great diaspora. And without understanding them and their motives, the whole migration and its social consequences are necessarily opaque.³

It is in this context, then, that this sketch of the Jacobson and

³ The outstanding attempt to write collective immigrant biography is Oscar Handlin's pioneering study, *The Uprooted* (Boston, 1951).

Kruskal families may be especially revealing. For by focussing on the interplay between social forces and individual circumstance, it can elucidate the dynamic relationships between environment and personal character. Neither family, Jacobson or Kruskal, possesses any special importance in conventional terms. In the last hundred years not one of them has impressed a substantial mark on their generation, and they have died as anonymously as they were born. Biographies of such families are seldom written. At best, historians treat them statistically, though more often merely in passing generalizations. Their behavior, where it is understood at all, is known only in terms of the large social forces—only in the publicly visible half of the human equation. This sketch of two Baltic families, the Jacobsons and the Kruskals, seeks to explore the intimate, private half—to examine the crucial intersection between individuals and society during a period of rapid and profound change.

THE JACOBSONS, 1870–1892

It was in my father's time that the young men began to go elsewhere to find work. Papa was prepared to be a rabbi, but as he did not marry a rich girl, that was impossible, so he got a job in Goldingen, Latvia, with Hertenberg, one of the rich families, who had a large wholesale dry-goods establishment. . . . He liked his work, his fellow-workers, his boss, everything about Goldingen. He learned German in the year or two he was away from Zhagar [Zagare], where Mama and little Jeannot [John] had remained, until the time that he earned enough to send for them.⁴

Isaac Jacobson, born at Zagare in 1849, was the sixth and youngest child of Loeb Jacobson and his wife Gittel. Isaac's father, a sage, had insisted that his fourth son follow him and become a rabbi, since all of the older boys were in trade. Young Isaac himself would have preferred to study medicine after leaving the yeshiva at the age of twenty, but as it turned out, neither medicine nor the rabbinate was economically feasible. So in 1872 Isaac was fortunate merely to land a clerk's job at Goldingen (the present-day Kuldiga), where he sold "woolens, silks, thread, needles, whatever" to the dozens of

⁴ MJK, Letters and Memoirs, August, 1969.

peddlers who “drove over the countryside selling.”⁵ By day Isaac Jacobson enjoyed the relaxed, convivial atmosphere of Hertenberg’s warehouse, and in the evenings and on Saturdays he was free to stroll in Goldingen’s city park or to study. And he did study—German—under the tutelage of a fellow worker, Herr Davidson, until volumes of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, and Heine took their place on his bookshelf beside the Bible and talmudic commentaries. Isaac Jacobson, who had longed to extend his learning into secular and “enlightened” works, found in romantic German literature a freedom and purity he would treasure for the rest of his life. Indeed, he became devoted to German culture. By the following year, when his young wife Pauline came to join him, bringing the baby John, he made German the language of his household and the Yiddish of the Zagare ghetto was laid aside. He “adored Goldingen.” In certain ways, it was clear, Isaac Jacobson “did not feel close to his family.”⁶

His inclinations, his desire to break free from the constraints of Zagare, had been implicit in his choice of a bride, Pauline Mandelstamm (1850–1922). She was the second daughter in a family of seven children, a family in which all surplus resources were spent on the education of the three sons. As a result, the dowry she brought Isaac, such as it was, could not possibly support his life as a rabbi; and so, while he could not be a physician and study science, at least his marriage provided a legitimate excuse for disappointing the father whom he revered, as did the entire Zagare community, for his kind, gentle spirit as well as for his *lamdonus*, his traditional Hebrew learning.

Perhaps Isaac Jacobson could not have made a rich marriage. It was, after all, a competitive market. But the son of a *talmid-chochom*, a scholar, he was well-educated, and he was slim and handsome, with finely chiseled features, a straight nose, and bright blue eyes. In Zagare, it is true, such looks may not have been a particular asset; surely they were better suited to cities outside the Pale, cities like imperial St. Petersburg (the present-day Leningrad) and the bustling old Hanseatic port of Riga and even modest Goldingen. At

⁵ *Ibid.* Goldingen was outside the Pale of Settlement within whose confines Jews had normally been required to live since the end of the eighteenth century.

⁶ *Ibid.*, February 13, 1970.

any rate, Isaac Jacobson chose to marry Pauline Mandelstamm in 1869, as soon as he left the yeshiva. He was only twenty, she nineteen. Presumably it was a love match, ratified by parental consent.

The Mandelstamms were not like the Jacobsons. Pauline's parents, Mendel Mandelstamm and Sara Berman Mandelstamm, were Jews of course, but though they lived in Zagare, they were not immersed exclusively in the Jewish religion. Mendel was a bristle merchant, and he came from a family which had been publicly inclined to assimilationism in Russia for more than a generation. Among his numerous uncles and cousins were three men who had become notable for liberal views: the brothers Benjamin (late 1700's-1886), Leon (1809-1889), and Max Mandelstamm (1838-1912), all born in Zagare. All had been liberally educated and trained in French and German, and all traveled widely. Benjamin, the eldest, became a distinguished writer of secular Hebrew prose. Leon had made his mark in 1844 by becoming the first Jewish graduate of the University of St. Petersburg. Subsequently he was placed in charge of all Jewish education in the Tsarist empire (1845-1857); and it was in this capacity that he had written a great deal, espousing progressive reforms and thereby alienating much of the Jewish community. Later, at Berlin in 1871, his Russian translation of the Hebrew Bible—considered a particularly assimilationist undertaking—was published. Although Leon Mandelstamm died a pauper, the great library which he had earlier collected was substantially preserved as the nucleus of the Jewish collection of the New York Public Library. The youngest brother, Max, studied at the universities of Dorpat and Kharkov in the 1850's and later at Berlin and Heidelberg before coming to prominence as one of the leading Russian ophthalmologists and as a writer of numerous scientific articles.⁷ Mendel himself was no match for his cousins, but his aspirations were similarly modern. All three of his sons, Pauline's brothers, went to university; two, David and Leopold, became physicians, and the third, Moritz, a businessman in St. Petersburg. Pauline's father and mother were soon to move out of Zagare and settle in Riga for the rest of their lives.

⁷ All of the information on the "famous" Mandelstamms is taken from *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1901-1906 [JE], VIII, 288-90. A collateral descendant is the noted Soviet poet Osip Mandelstamm (1891-1938).

By contrast, Isaac's father Loeb was to die where he had lived, in Zagare. Clearly, by marrying Pauline Mandelstamm, Isaac Jacobson joined himself to a progressive, outward-looking family, one which was distinctly cosmopolitan by Zagare standards.

In large part, Isaac Jacobson's decision to emigrate from Zagare to settle in Goldingen was personal, like his decision to marry Pauline. But social forces were also at work. Within a dozen years on either side of the time Isaac Jacobson left Zagare, three of his brothers settled in the Baltic port of Libau (the present-day Liepaja), and a number of Jaffes, Kruskals, and Mandelstamms, among others, were also departing to the north, out of the Pale. Jewish communities everywhere were experiencing centrifugal pressures which produced a sharp rise in geographic mobility, and the community in Zagare, located at the northern boundary of the Pale, was no exception.

The new mobility resulted from the confluence of several distinct forces. First, there was the continuous, inescapable pressure of increasing population. Between 1800 and 1880, the number of Jews in Eastern Europe doubled every forty years—which meant that where there had been one Jew in 1800, eighty years later there were four. This population explosion was apparently caused by improvements in the regularity and quality of the food supply as well as by improvements in public hygiene and disease control. The result was “a crisis of Malthusian proportions.”⁸

In addition, the traditional economic functions of Jews in the Russian Empire were becoming increasingly vulnerable owing to industrialization and the modernization of transport. Confined by Russian law within the Pale of Settlement since the end of the eighteenth century and generally forbidden to own land, Jews earned their subsistence in service occupations such as commerce, innkeeping, and estate management, as well as manufacturing—as artisans working in leather, wood, metal, and the building trades.⁹ In the traditional economy these activities had provided sufficient resources

⁸ Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), pp. 19–31; the quotation from p. 24.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–31.

to permit social stability. But the emancipation of the serfs in the early 1860's accelerated the modernization which had been developing for more than a generation. Now landlords were forced, in the interest of economy, to manage their estates themselves, while serfs freed from the land now furnished labor for the rapidly expanding railroads as well as for the nascent factory system. Simultaneously Jews found their traditional roles in the countryside diminished, while the larger-scale system of production and trade undercut their commercial and manufacturing roles. A few succeeded in making the transition owing to their wealth, ingenuity, and good fortune, but for the vast majority material existence became increasingly hazardous and the maintenance of both traditional family life and traditional scholarship more and more difficult.

Jews had, it is true, long been a preponderantly urban people, but only in the sense that Zagare and thousands of similar little towns were "urban." For most Jews had been living in tiny ghetto communities within pre-industrial towns of one or two thousand people, where intimacy, not anonymity, was the rule and where the matrix of social life was stable. The industrial cities now emerging were as alien to their experience as they were threatening to their traditional life-style. Raised within a conservative, introspective culture, Jews found the changes in Russian society enormously difficult and challenging. Their allegiance to tradition was being severely tested.

This was the context in which Isaac Jacobson decided to marry Pauline Mandelstamm, to take a secular job, and to settle in Goldingen. His father, born around 1808, was irrevocably immersed in the traditional way of life, but Isaac was modern. Recognizing the possibilities of suffocating in Zagare, he chose to leave, and in leaving, he disposed of his old ghetto identity as the son of the learned Loeb. He still revered his father and continued the Hebrew studies in which he had been trained, but he deliberately replaced Yiddish with German as his daily language and the language of his family. It was with pleasure that he accommodated himself to the advanced Germanic world of Goldingen. A community of perhaps 7,000 people about twice the size of Zagare, Goldingen was no great industrial city, but even to emigrate there meant a decisive break. Only



Isaac Jacobson
(1849-1930)



Pauline Mandelstamm Jacobson
(1850-1922)

seventy miles northwest of Zagare, Goldingen was radically different. It was outside the Pale and had no ghetto.

We had glass storm-windows, the space between filled with white cotton, wherein Fanny had placed straw flowers. These remained all winter long. The older ones skated on the frozen river, Fanny pushing along a chair with runners (sled) while I sat warmly wrapped and blissful. I had a fine early childhood.¹⁰

The home Isaac and Pauline Jacobson made for their family in Goldingen was a happy one. They were never rich, and in the more than twenty years he lived there, Isaac never went beyond employment by Hertenberg, but both he and Pauline were satisfied. In their early years together their lives were twice crossed by deep sadness, once in Zagare when their tiny daughter, their first child, suffocated in the feather bed after Pauline had fallen asleep nursing her, and again, three years later, when their second daughter, Ida, died in infancy. But as the years went by, Pauline, a sturdy, cheerful woman with sparkling brown eyes, gave birth to more children, and the little family grew.

Little John was an "only child" for the first five years of his life, with no other children at home for playmates. He was his father's darling. But in 1876 his sister Fanny was born, and then came a rapid succession of brothers and sisters: David in 1878; Max in 1880; and Clara in 1881. By the time John was ten years old, he had two little brothers and two little sisters, all under the age of six. Together they must have monopolized most of their parents' attention. Six years later, in 1887, baby Miriam was born, and she also was separate from the cluster. But if Miriam, little "Mitzchen" (kiten), sometimes felt left out and alone, she at least received the attention babies command as well as the mothering caresses of her older sisters, Fanny and Clara. To them she was not so much a rival as she was a real, live, gurgling plaything—someone to dress and undress, to feed and wash, to teach and scold. Little Miriam gave them importance in the family and an opportunity to act out the feminine role.¹¹ Within this relationship affection flowed freely, and a lifelong intimacy was created.

¹⁰ MJK, Letters and Memoirs, February, 1969.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, August, 1969.

But for John, adolescence was more difficult. Cast out of his solitary eminence by the births of his brothers and sisters, he would have to compete for parental approval in a world which grew more stringent and demanding with each passing year. In the late 1880's, when John and David were both attending Gymnasium, and their cousin Willy Milwitzky was living in their home and excelling them both, John felt the pressure especially keenly, as well as the edge of his father's reproofs.¹² John remained the dutiful son, but beneath his filial subordination lingered a hostility bred of circumstance.

All the same, life at home was comfortable, often cozy. They lived in a spacious apartment on the ground floor of a two-story house with a large, sunny courtyard. When the children were young, Isaac sang them happy children's songs and folksongs of pleasures and philosophy like *Rozhinkes mit Mandlen* ("Raisins and Almonds"). Pauline also sang, sometimes with tears in her eyes, her own Mendelssohn's wedding march, a melody fiddlers played at weddings in Zagare.¹³ On Saturday afternoons, while Pauline rested, Isaac took the children for walks, often to the beautiful Goldingen park. If it was cold, they might come home to find "a pot of hot coffee, a pitcher of hot milk, each with its cozy, standing on the table, together with Mama's good home-baked bread and butter." Eighty years later the experience was still vivid for Mitzchen.¹⁴

When the weather was milder, the young children played in the courtyard, under the watchful eyes of their mother, the maid, or an older sister. There, "one magical day, a troupe of acrobats entered, dramatically threw off their capes—there they were in green tights—spread a carpet and proceeded to tumble about, build pyramids and other such unheard of things."¹⁵ There were other exotic experi-

¹² *Ibid.* On one occasion, John took some *shnapps* after coming home with an unsatisfactory report card. When Isaac discovered it, he gave John a smack on the face which sent him reeling, and John passed out. Isaac feared he had hurt his son, and after John revived made no further mention of the incident. Throughout adult life, it appears, there was significant tension between Isaac and his eldest son.

¹³ *Ibid.*, March 20, 23, 1970.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, February, 1969.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, August, 1969.

ences to be had. Before Passover each year the Gypsy tinsmiths came to reline the copper pots: "There was a small kettle of bubbling tin; to me it looked like silver, resting on a small brazier. The dark man had a wooden stick with [an] iron knob at its end, which he placed into the boiling tin, quickly lined the inside of the pot, repeated this over and over until the entire surface was bright and shiny. One after the other all the pots got their new lining."¹⁶ Such were the delights of a Goldingen childhood.

The rules of family life were stern, "duty was so important," but they were sweetened with affection and occasional indulgences. "Papa," his youngest daughter recalled, "was a tyrant" and both she and her older sister Clara later asked themselves what invisible ability Isaac Jacobson possessed, "to exert such power over us." It was he who meted out punishment ("he spanked me and it still hurts").¹⁷ They "loved and admired him," but also "feared his displeasure *and anger*." Pauline, too, was stern, so "there was no permissiveness." Complaining was not tolerated.¹⁸ In this climate a little girl might wonder whether she really was a *bona fide* member of the family, or whether she might only have been deposited with the Jacobsons by Gypsies.¹⁹

Affection, however, was a constant part of the family, always visible in the playtimes of the children, both with their parents and among themselves. The children were expected to show respect; they would kiss their parents on the hand, but on birthdays there were presents and sometimes there were treats. The children felt the warm bonds of kinship wrapped around them, controlling and re-proving, but also protecting and nurturing. The family in Goldingen, unlike Zagare, was no longer interwoven with neighboring families into a communal web. Instead, it was separated from the rest of society both by its Jewishness and by its recent arrival. Faced with this new isolation, the family in Goldingen did not become looser and more flexible; its embrace continued firm, even defen-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, March 20, 1970.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, August, 1969.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, November 17, 1969.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, March 20, 1970. Both Miriam and Fanny Jacobson had such fantasies.

sive. Isaac and Pauline held their family together and maintained their authority largely by strength of will. And as time went on, it became apparent that maintaining its integrity was paramount in the outlook of both Pauline and Isaac.

It was, in fact, this commitment which finally brought the family of Isaac Jacobson to leave Goldingen for America. For as time went on, by the beginning of the 1890's, it became more and more apparent that there was little opportunity for John and David not only in Goldingen, but in the entire Russian Empire. Neither was sufficiently distinguished in the Gymnasium—part of the Gymnasium's top two percent—to attend university even if Isaac's job at Hertzberg's could have financed further education. Isaac was equally unable to pay the large "Guild" tax required of Jews who wished to move to a large city like Riga or St. Petersburg. Restrictions on Jews, moreover, were multiplying. So far the Jacobsons had been successful in avoiding the conscription of their sons into the Russian army, a six-year term if one was not rich enough to buy an exemption. But who could predict how long their good fortune would last, especially with David and Max soon to come of age?²⁰ In 1891, thousands of privileged Jews were unexpectedly and arbitrarily expelled from Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kiev. Within the decade the Russian Empire had witnessed great pogroms, and the rising tide of official anti-Semitism was enough to make even the most optimistic assimilationists tremble.²¹ One could, of course, continue to be a Jew in Russia, millions did, and the greatest wave of migration did not occur until after 1900 (1900–1914). But the Jacobsons were not deeply rooted in Goldingen, and with their children approaching maturity, the time for decision was at hand.

Still, it was a difficult choice. Isaac Jacobson had already moved once, twenty years earlier; he had already learned a new language and once before adapted himself to a new environment. And he was happy in Goldingen. Now in his early forties, he was not at all eager to leave. For Pauline, too, the decision to move was painful. Her

²⁰ *Ibid.*, August, 1969. MJK reports on subterfuges used to deceive government officials as to the number of sons in the family.

²¹ Rischin, *Promised City*, pp. 20, 24.

family was still in Russia, her brothers never would emigrate as they were launched on what appeared to be promising careers, and her parents had settled at Riga. She, too, had emigrated once before, and to move an entire household and recreate it thousands of miles away would surely be difficult. But both Isaac and she agreed that it would be best for John, David, and Max. The family must be held together, she believed, and so she persuaded Isaac that they should all leave.

But they did not all leave together. John, who had been trained as a bookbinder, would leave first and prepare the way. Then David, who at the age of thirteen was already learning to be a cabinet-maker, would follow. When both had found work, then Isaac, Pauline, and the four other children would follow. At the age of twenty-one John Jacobson was to bear primary responsibility for the great undertaking. Thus in 1891 he traveled alone from Goldingen to Libau (via Hasenpot [the present-day Aizpute]) and then by boat to Hamburg, where he embarked on the final voyage by steamship to New York. Now he was out from under his father's authority and free of his critical gaze. Now it was he who would lead the family. It was a trying experience, but also exhilarating.

Several months later word came back to Goldingen that John had found work as a bookbinder, and so it was now David's turn to leave:

One middle-of-the-night, all of us except John, who was in America, walked somewhere. We took up the entire roadway; I was impressed. It was to take David to his point of departure. . . . He chucked me under the chin, an unusual display, as he was not the kissing kind. My beloved big brother, just past fourteen.²²

He was setting out on his greatest adventure, to join his older brother in New York City, United States of America. The days of Gymnasium and studying and report cards were over. Now he would truly become a man. The trip all by himself was both frightening and exciting. Many years later he recalled that in his homesickness on shipboard he had written a letter home on a Saturday, but when he realized he had written on *Shabbos* he was panic-stricken and so threw the letter overboard. Perhaps he had remem-

²² MJK, Letters and Memoirs, February, 1969.

bered the story of Jonah. By the law of religion he was a man, but he was also still a boy.

Now it was time for the rest of the family. By this time, Isaac's two sisters, Deborah Jacobson Jaffy and Mara Jacobson Katz, had already moved to America with their husbands and were established there, the Jaffys in New York, the Katzes in Baltimore.²³ So the unknown immensity of the enterprise was reduced to human scale. John and David had found work which would provide immediate support, and the presence of both Deborah and Mara offered further security, while demonstrating that such a move was actually feasible. Goldingen was hard to leave, but gradually the departure became a reality.

First, however, both Isaac and Pauline journeyed to the homes of their parents to say goodbye, knowing that they would never see them again. To break the sadness of the final separation, they took little Miriam along. The bubbling incomprehension of a five-year-old would cheer and divert them. Who knows what passed through their minds? Loeb, a widower now in his eighties, had long since understood that his world and the life of the family as he had known it were passing away. None of his children had remained in Zagare. His eldest son, Feiva (born in 1830), had long since married a rich girl and moved to Moscow, where he had prospered. In the past year (1892) Feiva Jacobson had been expelled from Moscow, and at the age of sixty-one had moved his family to Palestine, where he was to found a dynasty of citrus growers. The middle sons, Yisroel and Motte, had moved north to Libau in Latvia years before, and Loeb's daughters were already in America. Now his youngest, Isaac, the yeshiva boy who preferred to speak German, was also going beyond Goldingen with his family, all the way to America. Loeb was not a passionate, temperamental man. For more than half a century, since he left the Zagare yeshiva, he had been listening to other people's problems, providing comfort and advice. He did not reprove his son for doing what he believed necessary; he was pleased they had come. Even little Miriam was touched by the expe-

²³ Although "Jaffy" and "Jaffe" are variant spellings of the same name, the two families referred to in this article are in fact distinct and are not, to my knowledge, connected.

rience: "He had a long white beard, wore a long black coat and a skullcap, was sweet and gentle. . . . Before we left he placed his hands upon my head, [and] blessed me."²⁴

The visit to Riga, to the home of the Mandelstamms, was quite different. The family was doing well in Russia in spite of persecutions, and Pauline was the third to leave for America. Earlier her sisters Hinda Mandelstamm Milwitzky and the widowed Lena Mandelstamm Gordon had settled in Newark, New Jersey. Little Miriam received a warm welcome from her Grandma Sara, and was given a present, "a jockey cap with a deep visor; when I returned to Goldingen, Clara thought I looked really elegant." Here there were no solemn blessings and presumably no long faces. Miriam went home remembering how beautiful Riga was, and how there were ice cream vendors all dressed in white and crying "Sacher Marosina."²⁵ The following year, in the early spring of 1893, the Jacobsons left Goldingen following the path that John had marked out little more than two years before, first to Isaac's brothers in Libau, and then on to Hamburg and New York.

THE KRUSKALS, 1870–1891

Some marriages, it is said, are made in heaven, but the marriage in March, 1879, between Moses David Kruskal (1850–1892) and Rosa Jaffe (1862–1924) was arranged in Dorpat (the present-day Tartu), Estonia. Moses David was twenty-nine; Rosa was barely seventeen. Her father, Rabbi Dov Ber Jaffe, and her older brothers, Rabbi Joshua Hoeshel and the merchant Abraham David, were all in straitened circumstances, so they believed that they could not afford to pass up the prospect of marrying Rosa to Moses David Kruskal, a solidly-established Dorpat white goods merchant. The fact that she was in love with a young man in her home town of Schaden was not permitted to interfere with the match. Abraham David Jaffe had himself recently married Moses David's younger sister Yetta, and he liked both the family and its solvency. Rosa was young,

²⁴ MJK, Letters and Memoirs, February, 1969.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, February, 1969.

pretty, and headstrong, but it was believed she would outgrow her earlier infatuation. Moses David was already very much taken with her, and given his solid, mature qualities as well as his affection and gentleness, she would, they were sure, learn to love him. Rosa, who did not get along with her stepmother, was in no position to defy her father and brothers, and so accepted their arguments and Moses David Kruskal.²⁶

Though their social ranks were roughly comparable, she was, in a sense, stepping down to marry Moses David. The Jaffes came from a most distinguished family of rabbis and scholars who traced their descent back to the great Mordecai Jaffe (1530–1612), a renaissance scholar who studied philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics at Prague and Venice before becoming head rabbi in Posen and Grodno. At Lublin, in 1590, Mordecai Jaffe had published the *Le-bushim*, an important rabbinical code distinguished for its emphasis on logic, its unequivocal opposition to usury, and its scientific explanation of the calendar, complete with tables and illustrations. Mordecai Jaffe himself was said to be descended from the great eleventh-century biblical commentator Rashi of Troyes (1040–1105).²⁷ Thus, in their genealogy at least, the Jaffes far outshone the Kruskals. More immediately, two of the Jaffes actually were rabbis, the most respected of occupations among Jews.²⁸

Moses David Kruskal, on the other hand, could claim a back-

²⁶ This paragraph is based on MJK recollections and on the following contemporary letters: Dov Ber Jaffe to Rabbi Joshua Hoeshel Jaffe, Dorpat, Wednesday, 3rd of Adar (no year given, probably 1879); Abraham David Jaffe to Rosa Jaffe Kruskal, Schaden, March 20, 1879; Dora Jaffe to Rosa Jaffe Kruskal, Schaden, March 20, 1879. Original copies of these letters are in the possession of Professor William H. Kruskal, Dept. of Statistics, University of Chicago.

²⁷ Information on Jaffe genealogy (including Rosa's father, Dov Ber Jaffe) and Mordecai Jaffe is from *JE*, VII, 53–63.

²⁸ It is significant that, in 1879, Dov Ber Jaffe wrote a personal letter to his son in Hebrew rather than the more common Yiddish. This suggests that the Jaffes were participants in the *Haskala* ("enlightenment") movement of the nineteenth century and were advanced and progressive rather than traditional in their cultural orientation. See Rischin, *Promised City*, pp. 38–42, for a sketch of the *Haskala* and its significance.



Moses David Kruskal
Dorpat, ca. 1879



Rosa Jaffe Kruskal
Dorpat, ca. 1879

ground which was merely respectable. His father, Isaac Kruskal (born Klueber-Kruskal), a native of Krettingen (the present-day Kretinga), a small town of less than 2,000 close to the Baltic coast, had moved northward out of the Pale to Dorpat in the 1840's.²⁹ Later Isaac Kruskal married his niece or cousin, Hinde Kruskal; Moses David was their eldest son. He was raised in Dorpat in a comfortable Yiddish-speaking home, and after his marriage he was able to provide similar comforts for his own family.³⁰ Rosa Jaffe may have missed romance, but there were other compensations.

A houseful of children came quickly. One year after their marriage, in 1880, Rosa presented her husband with a son. They named him Isaac Kruskal, for Moses David's father. A year later came a second son, Aaron Herman, and in 1883 and 1885 two more sons were born, William and Joseph Bernard. Within six years after their marriage, Rosa had borne four sons, and three years later, in 1888, she was to give birth to a fifth, Eugene. It was remarkable. With such a string of sons, Moses David might found a dynasty, and Rosa was only twenty-six.

For a while it seemed like a real possibility. Dorpat in the 1870's and 1880's was booming. In those years the population was rising sharply from around 10,000, when Moses David's father had come, to around 35,000 in 1890. Moses David was an enterprising and successful merchant who dealt mostly with Gentiles, since the population was overwhelmingly Lutheran (96 percent), Estonians primarily, with a few Germans, Russians, and Swedes, and only a

²⁹ The origin of the name "Kruskal" is not definitely established, but appears to be taken from the name of a tiny cross-roads village in Latvia nine miles northwest of Zagare, today called "Krūškalne" (United States Board on Geographic Names, *Official Standard Names, Gazetteer No. 42*, 2nd ed., U.S.S.R., III [Washington, D.C., 1970], 710). According to family legend the name had previously been Michaelson but had been changed in order to avoid administrative identification as Jews.

³⁰ These inferences are drawn from Moses David Kruskal's surviving letters, facts known about his Dorpat lifestyle, and by the survival of a few pieces of heavy mid-nineteenth-century Russian silver marked with the initials of Hinde Kruskal, Moses David's mother. MDK was born with a clubfoot and limped; this defect may have been due to the kinship of his parents.

handful of Jews.³¹ In the 1880's his children were being educated by German schoolmasters in the Dorpat schools, and if the assimilationist trends of the previous generation had continued, his sons would probably have remained in Dorpat for a third generation. But the same political pressures which were facing Jews elsewhere in the Russian Empire reached them also at Dorpat. Even before the expulsion of privileged Jews from Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kiev in 1891, it is apparent that Moses David Kruskal was looking out for a friendlier environment in which to raise his family. Life was still good in Dorpat; and the family was still spending the summers at the *dacha* (country house) they rented on the Peipus See, where the boys so admired the fishermen with their spears; but Moses David had his eye on the future. If he could liquidate his business in Dorpat and bring his capital to New York, then he could make a secure home for his darling Rosa and the children (now six, since Deborah was born in 1890). Over forty, he was no longer young. It would be hard to leave his birthplace and the *dacha*, but the lives of his sons were more important. So in 1890 or 1891 he and his younger brother Nicholas Kruskal, a Dorpat-trained pharmacist, and their brother-in-law Abraham David Jaffe decided to join forces and go together to New York. They left Estonia in the summer of 1891 and arrived in New York on September 15.³² Abraham David Jaffe brought his family with him, but Moses David Kruskal left Rosa and

³¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th ed., Cambridge, England, 1910): articles on Courland, Estonia, Lithuania.

³² MJK, Letters and Memoirs, n.d., information supplied by Isaac Jaffe (b. 1882), son of Abraham David Jaffe and nephew of Rosa Jaffe Kruskal. Moses David was not the first Kruskal to emigrate to America. His first cousin, Mordecai Moshe Kruskal (1847-1911), eldest son of Hinde Kruskal's older brother, Wolfe Kruskal, had settled in Cincinnati, Ohio, around 1880 after having first spent the years 1876-1880 seeking opportunities in South Africa. Since Moses David Kruskal had been raised in Dorpat and his cousin Mordecai in Lithuania (probably Plungian), and since Moses David went to New York rather than Cincinnati, there is no reason to believe that the cousins were in contact. Subsequently, however, in the years between 1900 and 1920 there were significant contacts between the New York and Cincinnati Kruskals, including occasional visits in both cities. See note 68 below. All information on this branch of the Kruskal family comes from a series of letters from Reva Sussman Olch of Dayton, Ohio, to the author during February, March, and April, 1971. Mrs. Olch's mother, Gail Gertrude (Gella Gita) (1882-1970), was Mordecai Moshe Kruskal's daughter.

the children in Dorpat, planning to bring them later to a real home in New York.

NEW YORK IN THE 1890's

The city to which the Jacobsons and Kruskals came in the early 1890's was a booming congeries of disparate economic activities, neighborhoods, and ethnic groups. Boss Tweed and his gang had been put out of business twenty years earlier, largely by the *New York Times* and a few crusading reformers, but the conditions which had produced Tweed continued to dominate New York City public life. Divided and localized by ethnic and economic relationships, the people of New York seldom perceived "the general good" and instead thought about and voted for their short-term, immediate local interests. It was on this base that Irish New Yorkers, together with Germans and some upstate and out-of-state Yankees, created the Tammany machine, a mechanism which provided stable, predictable government (and non-government), as well as a modicum of social security, from the mid-1800's to the emergence of Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia in the 1930's.³³

The population statistics for the period 1870 to 1900 give some indication of the explosive magnitude of New York City's growth. Already by 1870 it was one of the world's largest cities with 1.5 million inhabitants; by the turn of the century its population had more than doubled, and now stood at 3.5 million. Native New Yorkers were in a minority, and of the many foreign ethnic groups which had flocked to the city, immigrants of German and Irish birth were the most numerous.

Jews, however, were also present in large numbers and visible well before 1890. At the end of the Civil War, there had been some thirty synagogues in the city, and twenty-five years later, in 1890, there were 134.³⁴ A Jewish ghetto had emerged on the Lower East

³³ Seymour J. Mandelbaum, *Boss Tweed's New York* (New York, 1965); Rischin, *Promised City*, p. 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4. According to the U.S. Census of 1890, there were 125 Orthodox and nine Reform congregations in Manhattan. See Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census: Report on Statistics of Churches in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1894), pp. 416, 418.

Side, with a distinctive character and community life. It was not as large or as culturally developed in 1890 as it would be ten or twenty years later, but it had already become the largest and most diverse "Jewish city" in the world. Here Jews from all over Central and Eastern Europe, and even the Mediterranean, were brought together in close proximity. Old ways and new ways, a thousand localisms, dozens of variants of Yiddish and Hebrew, all came together under the pressure of immigration and adaptation to a new world. The "ghetto" of New York was like no other ghetto in the world—for it was, like the rest of New York, highly fluid, a polyglot, diverse community. As in the ghettos of Europe, its inhabitants were Jews, but in New York they were not bound in their Jewishness by external governmental restraints, or by self-generated, centuries-old internal constraints. The structure, the cohesion, the tradition of a European ghetto were all absent. Instead, the ghetto resembled the larger New York City, a helter-skelter, laissez-faire environment of competitive enterprise.

All of the immigrants must have found the city a bewildering, even frightening place. Separated from the familiar and traditional, they were brought into immediate contact with a society of rapid, kaleidoscopic change. For some, however, the shock was greater than for others. Moses David Kruskal was doubtless confused by much of what he saw, but his surviving letters, written only a few months after arrival, indicate that he was adjusting to New York quickly. He was mastering a most exciting challenge, and his letters express the confidence of one who knows he is being tested and who believes himself equal to the test. Dorpat was not New York City, but Dorpat was an expanding commercial center which had already grown to a size where urban anonymity existed. Moses David Kruskal was used to dealing with strangers in business, and even before leaving Dorpat, he had often traveled in the course of his work. Now he was engaged in similar work, and past experience, as well as personal chemistry, enabled him to take hold in New York.

For Isaac Jacobson, however, it was a different story. Raised in Zagare, he had regarded provincial Goldingen as a large, cosmopolitan place. There he had worked as an employee in a single outfit for twenty years, seeing the same faces and making the same decisions again and again. His world had been almost entirely stable. The

contrast with New York City was overpowering. His response would be to withdraw into the safety and intimacy of his own family, where his identity was secure and the competitive struggle of American life could be shut out. It was his sons who would fight those battles.

THE KRUSKALS IN NEW YORK, 1891–1908

When Moses David Kruskal arrived in New York in September, 1891, the American economy was booming. Every industry was expanding and modernizing, and the textile and garment industries were no exception. The only shortage was capital, and he and his Jaffe in-laws had brought their own. It was a propitious moment to launch a new enterprise, and their plans rapidly took shape.

Abraham David Jaffe, by virtue of a Kruskal connection, had been placed in charge of a boardinghouse for immigrants owned by the United Hebrew Charities. It was located on East 12th Street near University Place, and it was there that Moses David Kruskal, his brother Nicholas, and his sister Yetta Kruskal Jaffe and her children lived briefly when they first arrived. Within four months, however, both Abraham David Jaffe and Moses David Kruskal were already doing business and beginning to turn a profit. They were already taking hold in the competitive world of the garment trade.

In January, 1892, Moses David wrote in Yiddish to Rosa describing his circumstances:

I am at business all day [until 9 or 10 P.M.] and work hard. I have reason to hope that my business will develop very nicely. However, one must have patience. The income is fair. . . . I prefer to open a dry-goods business with Jaffe. First of all, I know this line. . . . The dry-goods business here is very prosperous, they manufacture all sorts of articles. . . . Nicolai [Nicholas] and I live in back of the business. We prepare our own breakfast and supper. We are trying to arrange now about dinners.

The business was located at 126 East Broadway, at the southern edge of the Jewish quarter. Kruskal was a prudent entrepreneur and husbanded his capital, believing "it is better to start small and have things develop."⁸⁵ But he was basically confident, and it is this confi-

⁸⁵ Moses David Kruskal to Rosa Jaffe Kruskal, New York City, January 13, 1892. This and the MDK letters cited below are written in Yiddish and are in the possession of Prof. William H. Kruskal, University of Chicago.

dence which forms a prominent theme in his letters: "one hopes that things will work out for the best"; "one is bound to prosper"; "the dry-goods business will undoubtedly develop"; "business is progressing nicely"; "prosperity is in the offing"; "my business is prospering and I am able to provide for the future." Labor, he reported, was "very cheap and the output very great." These were the conditions that enabled capitalists to flourish; and Kruskal and Jaffe were petty capitalists experiencing the first thrill of a booming economy which was free of social and political constraints. After the first months he and Jaffe ran the business themselves, and Nicholas was able to take up "a very good position" as a pharmacist.³⁶

Moses David Kruskal worked so hard that he had little time for homesickness. From morning until night, Monday through Saturday, he was busy. He accepted American custom and took his day of rest on Sundays, and it was only occasionally that he could afford to "go out in the evening" during the week, and then only for a short visit with one of the relatives or friends from Dorpat. He longed for Rosa and his children and became increasingly impatient for them to join him. When Rosa's letters were delayed, he fretted, and when the children were slow to write, he was quick to ask why. He was eager to learn about "everything" at home, and he treasured the photographs they sent. Concentrating all day on becoming established, he found that whenever his mind wandered and his imagination was active, his thoughts were filled with visions of his family and domestic happiness.³⁷

Rosa also had an imagination, and she was anxious. She was fearful of the unknown, and occasionally a disturbing letter from someone else would arrive in Dorpat giving rise to worrisome rumors. So Moses David was reassuring. They were merely "painting the picture in dark colors. Pay no attention to this, everything in America is in perfect condition. I have a good business and trust it will prosper." Concern and reassurance were in all his letters, and his love for Rosa was visible in his eagerness to have her with him. He expressed his dreams with certainty: "I wish we could be here together

³⁶ Moses David Kruskal to Rosa Jaffe Kruskal and Hinde Kruskal, New York City, letters of January and February, 1892.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

this very moment, it is the great hope of my life. Shall build a nice home, be comfortable.”³⁸

By the end of the winter his dream seemed to be nearly within his grasp. After Passover, in May, he planned, they would all come over to the new homeland. On Rosa’s birthday he wrote that it was an American holiday: “They call it in our country ‘Washington’s Birthday,’ ” and he sent a dollar as a gift and with it the “hope that next year we will celebrate your birthday together.”³⁹ But suddenly his dreams were cut off. In March, just two months before the expected reunion, Moses David Kruskal contracted typhus together with Yetta’s ten-year-old son Isaac Jaffe. Both were sent to the hospital for contagious diseases on North Brother Island in the East River, and it was there on March 14, 1892, that Moses David Kruskal died.⁴⁰ He was, according to an outsider who knew him, the “nicest of all the Kruskal men,” a fine man who had “all of the qualities” his sons were to develop, “but none of their failings.”⁴¹ Rosa, whose baby Deborah had just died of diphtheria, was now a widow at the age of thirty, and her five sons were fatherless.

But there was no turning back. The ties with Dorpat had already been severed and the Kruskals no longer possessed any livelihood there. Rosa, together with the children and her mother-in-law Hinde Kruskal, had already departed. So it was on to America, Moses David’s new country where, fortunately, Nicholas and the Jaffes were already established. Only when they arrived in New York in the summer of 1892, did Rosa learn that her husband was dead and that her boys, twelve-year-old Isaac, eleven-year-old Aaron Herman, nine-year-old William, seven-year-old Joseph, and four-year-old Eugene were now fatherless.⁴²

³⁸ Moses David Kruskal to Rosa Jaffe Kruskal, New York City, February 5, 1892.

³⁹ Moses David Kruskal to Rosa Jaffe Kruskal, New York City, February 22, 1892.

⁴⁰ MJK, *Letters and Memoirs*, n.d., information supplied by Isaac Jaffe.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* MJK reports the judgment of her eldest brother John Jacobson.

⁴² This is the traditional family account of the sequence of events and it squares with surviving data. See letter of William H. Kruskal to author, November 28, 1970.

Their survival was tied to the family. For two women to come to New York with five young boys would otherwise have been a horror in 1892. In the following year, the United States sank into the deepest depression it had ever known, a depression which lasted until 1897. Public social agencies were virtually non-existent, and the private organizations were few and under-financed. Without Nicholas Kruskal and the Jaffes to fall back on, there is little doubt that Rosa's family would have dissolved. The women would have been sewing in sweatshops if they were lucky, and the boys growing up in the street. Instead, the assets Moses David had left behind were liquidated and used to purchase a pharmacy which Nicholas operated to support the family. The pharmacy, and Nicholas' good health, provided a crucial decade of maintenance until Isaac, Herman, and Joseph Kruskal were self-supporting.

It was a turbulent household in which Rosa's boys grew up. Grandma Hinde lived with Uncle Nicholas behind the pharmacy, and Rosa's family had a separate apartment. Though Uncle Nicholas did his best to serve as a father for his nephews, discipline was bound to suffer with no man at home. Rosa, while frequently demanding, was also indulgent with the boys. They were all she had, and since her future with Moses David had abruptly ended, her dreams and aspirations centered on her sons. And generally they did not let her down, although they each paid a personal price and their rivalry as brothers was often intense.

They all went immediately into public school, where they quickly learned the language and manners of their Jewish-American peers. Isaac, the eldest, and William, the third son, both finished high school and went on to become pharmacists in the family drugstore. But shortly after 1900, Isaac opened his own pharmacy uptown on 57th Street, and when in 1905 he began to attend Bellevue Medical College, he gave up his drugstore to devote himself full time to medicine. He became an intern in 1907 and so fifteen years after his father's death and his own arrival in America, he had succeeded in entering a learned and honored profession, medicine, which he would practice until his death forty-five years later.

Aaron Herman Kruskal, the second son, left school in 1896 at the age of fifteen to go to work. He had attended Public School No. 2, and in 1896 he was awarded the medal for "Department," but

although he would have liked to continue in college and study law, money was needed.⁴³ That autumn he got his first full-time job. Now playtimes were over, and the vacation summers spent barefoot, picking blueberries, and savoring nature on a farm in Chesterfield, Connecticut, like the summers at the *dacha* on the Peipus See, were over. The well-behaved A. Herman Kruskal became a workingman at \$2.50 per week.

Herman worked for A. Beller and Company, a manufacturer of ladies' coats and suits; and it was from Mr. Beller that he learned the standards of an honorable businessman. Beller grew to like Herman, who was honest and sensible and a hard and imaginative worker. Before long Herman was promoted to become Beller's assistant. By 1905, shortly before he left Beller to start his own business at the age of twenty-five, he was earning a handsome salary, \$80 per week in a time when the average man was earning about \$12.⁴⁴ It was largely on the strength of Herman's salary that the family moved to 340 East 18th Street and that Rosa toured Europe in 1906. As yet none of the boys were married. Isaac was involved in medical education, and Eugene was still in high school. The others, Herman, Willy, and Joe, all contributed to the household. Joe was already "on the road" much of the time, selling.

From a personal standpoint, Herman's rapid success and the move to East 18th Street had important consequences, since it brought the Kruskals and Jacobsons together. They had known of one another's existence for many years, and the two families had previously been linked, but in 1904 they both moved into the same apartment building.⁴⁵ Within two years Herman Kruskal was engaged to Miriam, the youngest of the Jacobson girls, and in 1908 they were married.

⁴³ Medal now in possession of the author; judgment as to reasons for decision comes from MJK, Letters and Memoirs.

⁴⁴ MJK, Letters and Memoirs, reports AHK salary. For the comparative statistics, see *Historical Statistics of the United States to 1957* (Washington, D.C., 1960), p. 91.

⁴⁵ The immediate link between the two families was between Hinde Kruskal and Pauline Mandelstamm, who were first cousins. Hinde's mother, Rochele Berman, was an elder sister of Pauline's mother, Sara Berman Mandelstamm.

THE JACOBSONS IN NEW YORK, 1892-1908

John and David Jacobson had done their jobs well. When the rest of the family arrived in May, 1893, they found a small apartment waiting for them at 133 Madison Street, only a couple of blocks from where Moses David Kruskal had located his store. Isaac Jacobson's married sister was living across the street, and so, as such things go, the shock of arrival was cushioned. Both John and David were working, Isaac had brought a little money, and so their subsistence was momentarily assured. The family, moreover, was intact. No one was sick, and they were all together. The new beginning was at hand.

But for Isaac Jacobson the task was not so simple as for his sons. In middle age, he lacked the flexibility of youth, and he had a keen sense of *amour-propre*. Shortly after their arrival the depression of '93 hit, so jobs of any sort were scarce and poorly paid. He, a learned man erudite in both Hebrew and German writings, was not about to go upon the streets as a common peddler, begging for sales, haggling so as to earn a few pennies. Others, by the thousand, more pressed for survival, had to swallow their pride and do precisely that.⁴⁶ But Isaac Jacobson had alternatives. No, he would not even permit his wife to open a store as she wished. She must be in the home. As Miriam later recalled: "He was unhappy here, too proud to do the work he could have found, too timid to try and find what he would have liked, so—he taught Hebrew and the children all went to work (except Clara and I . . .). We attended school."⁴⁷ Now

⁴⁶ Hutchins Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto* (rev. ed.; New York, 1909), discusses this phenomenon in chapters one and two. From time to time, Isaac Jacobson did work at home, giving Hebrew lessons, and when they lived on East 4th Street (1895-1904), acting as an agent for Burns Brothers Coal Company. Later, he worked part time as a bookkeeper for his son John's printing firm. He never, however, left the protected environment of home and family. In 1904, his son David planned to set him up with a small stationer's store, with Miriam acting as his clerk. But shortly before the plan was to go into operation, Isaac had a headache, called David in to speak to him, and said: "David, ich kann nicht." (Source: MJK, Letters and Memoirs, November 17, 1969, and March 8, 1970.)

⁴⁷ MJK, Letters and Memoirs, August, 1969.

Fanny, who was almost seventeen, and Max, who was only thirteen, joined John and David as breadwinners. Isaac Jacobson was willing to sacrifice his happiness in Goldingen for the sake of the children and to preserve family cohesion, but his own life and sensibilities also counted. The competitive, abrasive style of New York business, and his realistic fear of rejection and brutal defeat, the fate of so many, kept Isaac at home.

Miraculously, with Mama and Papa at home, and four of the six children out supporting the family, they were able to maintain its traditional, patriarchal structure. Pauline, a sensitive woman, declared that the children should not give their household contributions to her, even though she did the shopping and spent most of the cash. She understood Isaac's humiliation and worked to preserve his old role and status, declaring that "Papa should be the manager, he being the head of the household."⁴⁸ Thus the forms, if not the entire substance, of family relationships were maintained at the Jacobson home.

But in the streets it was different. Four of the Jacobsons were coming to terms with the customs of their working life, and Clara and Miriam were in the public schools. Miriam's vivid recollections of her life in the neighborhood reveal some of the ways in which Goldingen manners and traditional authority were undermined, with "Americanization" taking place:

I loved it, played with the kids, where I was the "greenhorn," but soon learned English [including gutter slang]. . . . There was a horse-car on Madison Street. . . . I loved hitching on the cars (I was 6-9 [years old]). Also, the kids played on the roof and one of the games [was walking around the edge of the roof on a raised coping]. . . . I did it.

In order to be really "Americanish" one had to eat a banana, so my cousins, who lived across the way, said. . . . I remember forcing myself to eat that soft, strange-looking fruit, so unlike an apple or pear.

Miriam passed through the initiation rites and enjoyed an exciting time. With the girls she learned to play "jacks" on the stoops of houses, and though she and the other little girls were forbidden to talk to boys, they did so secretly, their experience enhanced by stealth. "When the organ-grinder came several times a week, *all* the

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, November 17, 1969.

girls danced to his music, and very pretty it was, sort of folk dances with a waltz or a polka thrown in. I learnt dancing right there, when I was 9–12 years old.”⁴⁹

Isaac and Pauline were aware of the influences that lurked in the street, and they were anxious to shelter their daughters from them. Nearby was Allen Street, where red lights were literally hung and prostitution flourished under police protection. Later, Miriam recalled:

My parents were suspicious of strangers, and I see now, with good cause. There were ice-cream parlors, some of the slick Greek owners were of questionable morals. . . . When one of my school friends induced me to go to an ice-cream parlor, my father (who did not approve of her because she had poor manners, was loud) followed us and I had to leave that gorgeous strawberry mound and go home with him my parents were terrified. Also they feared missions.⁵⁰

And well they might, though they did not know that as the Salvation Army went from street to street with its band blaring *Onward Christian Soldiers*, young Miriam sang with them, sometimes following to the mission-hall, where she “was given a tambourine, and had one wonderful time.” Nor did they know that Miriam went to the German Methodist Church with her friend Lucy Beckmann and joined a singing group called “Christian Endeavor.” She proudly wore their emblem “CE,” telling her family it stood for “Evening Circle”—and they believed it until Cousin George Mandelstamm Milwitzky put an end to the deception by telling Miriam’s parents the truth.⁵¹

The Jacobsons maintained a Jewish home, but it was hard to withstand the friendly pressures of Christian Americanization. By 1898 or 1899, even Christmas was secretly imported by the children:

In spite of a sort of austere home, we had fun, Clara and I, Dave and Max. Once we were envious of all the Xmas doings, so after Mama and Papa went to bed (no later than 9), we four hung up our stockings near the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, August, 1969; November 17, 1969.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, December 25, 1969.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, November 17, 1969; December 25, 1969.

kitchen stove, stuffed them with whatever was edible, then, after an interval, snuck into the room and had a jolly time.⁵²

It was fun becoming an American, but there was a strain in simultaneously maintaining Judaism. It seemed to be old-fashioned, European, and generally “foreign” in America, a society where religious identity was as much a matter of choice as of birth.

Moreover, there was an identity problem at the core of the entire family, a problem compounded by their emigration. Isaac Jacobson himself was not entirely at home in traditional Judaism; he had been growing away from it ever since he left the yeshiva, and Pauline’s commitment to it was more passive and habitual than active and positive. Judaism in the Jacobson home had become customary—without fervor and without theology. It was a beautiful habit, but not vital:

[Mama] accepted wholly the religion she was brought up in. I don’t believe she questioned nor pondered about it. She *believed*—in a personal God, I think, also in rewards, as well as punishments. Friday evening was to her a beautiful end to a busy and often difficult week. The brass candlesticks were gleaming, the white tablecloth, the *challah* with its embroidered cover, for my papa to make Kiddush (the prayer). The good, good meal, all six of us at the long table (Fanny and John were married). It was beautiful also for me. Papa . . . had a good voice, chanted the prayers and blessings, and it was very special. Not one of us four [children] felt it as something religious, just *Shabbos* at home. Many years later Papa told me that while his beliefs had changed, the rituals still were beautiful to him, tied him to a tradition he wanted to hold onto. He said that nothing in his new surroundings brought him inner satisfaction, so he continued the old.

The Jewish holidays were celebrated at home, but there was little synagogue-going. On the high holy days, Isaac and Pauline attended and the children visited them for an hour here or there, but Isaac, unlike Pauline, did not observe the fast of Yom Kippur, and when he returned home from services, he always had a headache. The boys were instructed in religion and became bar mitzvah, but there was no training for the girls and no explanations of ritual at home. Pauline stopped wearing a *sheitel* (traditional wig) at Isaac’s request, and he ceased to say his morning prayers a few years after

⁵² *Ibid.*, November 17, 1969.

arrival. The *shabbos-goy* whom they had employed on Madison Street in 1893 and 1894 did not follow them in 1895 when they moved to East 4th Street. Pauline never did cook on *shabbos*, but in other respects their observance of the Sabbath largely disappeared.⁵³ David Jacobson need not have worried when he wrote his shipboard letter on the sabbath; his act was precursor to a family pattern.

Isaac Jacobson clung to Jewish ways defensively. They were a part of his identity which he had partially rejected, but could not replace. To have let go, to have let Jewish ritual fall completely by the wayside as Rosa Kruskal and her boys had done—the Kruskals did not even “eat kosher”—would have been to sever himself from his father entirely and to become anonymous. As time passed, all of Isaac’s children except the eldest, John, drifted away from Judaism, remaining Jews only by descent. Yet they did not “go over to the other side”—they never converted, never became Christians. Once, in the 1920’s, when David Jacobson was asked by his suburban friends why he was so against joining the Unitarian Church even though he shared most of its tenets, he produced a picture of Loeb Jacobson in beard and skullcap, explaining “this is the reason.”⁵⁴

The children left Judaism gradually, their attachment eroding, so there was never any dramatic break. Isaac, himself something of an enlightened freethinker in his youth, was hardly the one to criticize the beliefs of others. Perhaps he remembered his own father’s tolerance. Pauline, too, seems to have understood. Anyway, in a family where religion was mostly ritual, there were other more immediate issues to absorb their emotions. By 1895, the first marriage among their children had occurred, and soon there would be grandchildren.

The marriages of the six children generally reflected their lingering Baltic provincialism. Only David, who married late and who had always eagerly sought out a wider circle of friends, married someone with no previous link to the family or to Goldingen. Nor was it

⁵³ *Ibid.* Also, Richard D. Brown interview of MJK, July 25, 1970, New Milford, Conn. One indication of Isaac Jacobson’s values as well as his attachment to Jewish identity is illustrated by the fact that he always kept a framed engraving of Sir Moses Montefiore (1784–1885). Montefiore, a wealthy English Jew, was a champion of Jewish liberty and advancement in mid-nineteenth-century Europe.

⁵⁴ MJK, Letters and Memoirs, November 17, 1969.

any wonder, given the pattern of social life the children encountered in their teens and twenties. Though all of the teenagers attended what might be called “Jewish community center” programs at the University Settlement and the Educational Alliance, much social life was at home and with the family. Papa Isaac and David would sing together. David would also whistle John Philip Sousa marches, and John sang German drinking-songs. For variety, Clara and Miriam sang popular songs—even “while doing the dishes, then danced on the smooth kitchen oil cloth floor.” When they went out to dance it was normally with relatives to an immigrants’ social club, the “Kurlander Verein.”⁵⁵

Perhaps it was there that Fanny Jacobson first danced with Moses (later called “Morris”) Trubek, the son of a prosperous Riga merchant (Meyer Trubek), a chemical engineer in his twenties who held a degree (valedictorian) from the Riga Polytechnic Institute.⁵⁶ Moses proposed to Fanny, she accepted, and in 1895 they were married and set up housekeeping in New York. He was twenty-eight; Fanny was nineteen. One year later, in February, 1896, the first grandchild, the first native American, was born, Leo Trubek.

Two years later, in 1897, John Nicholas Jacobson married Esther Hirschmann, of Springfield, Massachusetts. John had not been scouring New England in search of a bride; it just happened that Esther’s parents were from Goldingen, where she had been born, and the families were already acquainted. It was a similar story in 1907, when Clara married the twenty-six-year-old Sigmar Pirosh, M.D. Doctor Pirosh was from Chicago, but he had Goldingen cousins—his grandfather was from Zagare—and had met Clara when she was visiting a girlhood friend in Baltimore in 1906. Perhaps there was some matchmaking going on as Clara was already twenty-five, but in any case it was the Goldingen link that brought them to the marriage canopy on New Year’s Day, 1907.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* MJK reports that David Jacobson was actually a member of the “Kurlander Verein.”

⁵⁶ All information on marriages and “in-laws” comes from Family Data Questionnaires and from MJK recollections. Moses Trubek left Riga secretly against his family’s wishes, and was the only member of his family to come to America. Ironically, he did not encourage his sons to pursue independent careers as he had done.

Then in 1908 Miriam married Aaron Herman Kruskal, the young, successful garment manufacturer. They had met when the Jacobsons moved to their brand-new six-room apartment at 340 East 18th Street in 1904. The Kruskal boys lived across the courtyard and “snooped.” Moreover, “street musicians often played there, [and] heads appeared at all the windows. . . . Proximity played cupid.” Miriam by this time was on the verge of womanhood. When she took her first job as a stenographer in 1905, she was exhilarated to be earning money, to be out in the world, and independent. Now she “was going with Herman and life was wonderful.”⁵⁷ In 1906 they were engaged, and two years later they married. He was twenty-six; she twenty-one. After their marriage they moved one block west, to 245 East 18th Street. Marriage notwithstanding, family ties remained powerful.

One year later, in 1909, Miriam’s older brother Max married Meta Jacobson, who was no relation, but a native of Goldingen. He had met her through a Goldingen friend. A quiet, sweet, somewhat timid person, Max had always been overshadowed by his older brothers John and David. He was a “middle child” who got lost in the middle.⁵⁸ But he was not the last to marry. Instead, it was the dynamic, outgoing, ambitious David who did not marry until 1912, when at thirty-four he married the thirty-six-year-old schoolteacher Martha Goodkind. Martha, of German-Jewish descent, had no Baltic connections. She was a native New Yorker.

AMERICAN ROOTS: THE JACOBSONS AND KRUSKALS, 1908–1930

The America in which the Jacobson and Kruskal children came of age, married, and began their own families was already significantly different from the way it had been when their parents arrived in the early nineties. Material changes were visible everywhere in New York: skyscrapers were being built, and horsecars were being replaced by electric trolleys; subways carried people from one end of Manhattan to the other and across the East River to Brooklyn;

⁵⁷ MJK, *Letters and Memoirs*, December 25, 1969. Pauline Mandelstamm Jacobson’s mother, Sara Berman, was the sister of Hinde Kruskal’s mother.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, December 25, 1969.

automobiles had supplanted horse-drawn carriages; and in the home electricity had replaced gaslights and supplied the energy for a dozen work-saving appliances. In politics it was a new generation, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson instead of Benjamin Harrison and Grover Cleveland. In 1892, the big questions had centered on the currency and on tariffs, but by 1910 American concern had shifted to the issues raised by the Progressives—the maintenance of a competitive and democratic society in a modern industrial state. Now debates revolved around reform in government, the control of corporations, and maintaining a competitive economic system. In New York, a leading Progressive state, legislation dealing with the labor of women and children, with the health and safety of all workers, with tenements and public health—all were receiving prolonged attention. American social sensibilities, overlaid by economic ambition for two generations, were once more aroused and operative in public life. The consequences were largely—but not entirely—positive.

With the increasing concern for the quality of American life went a mounting alarm regarding the extent and impact of immigration. Even though the percentage of immigrants in the population remained almost constant from 1850 to 1920, hovering around 15 percent, anxieties grew. From 1900 through 1910 the average annual migration into the United States stood at 840,000, and in four individual years it topped one million. By 1910 some eastern cities such as New York had immigrant populations exceeding 25 percent, and if first-generation Americans were added to the newcomers, then the numbers often soared close to 50 percent. In the Northeast, moreover, the immigrants were mostly Catholics and Jews, so that American Protestants were fearful of being engulfed. Birthrates among immigrant families were significantly higher than among native Americans, and if this trend together with unlimited immigration continued, then it was not unrealistic to fear that the American way of life was in danger. By 1910, all Oriental immigration into the United States had been banned. In 1924, all immigration would be drastically curtailed.

Americans were anxious also for other reasons. Most of them had experienced some migration within the United States. They had left

the farms and small towns and flocked to the cities. Within individual families, old patterns were under challenge, and new manners were forever intruding. The old national identity with its agrarian heritage was crumbling before the rise of industrialization and urban development. Native Americans, with identity problems of their own, indulged themselves in chauvinism and in anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism. All of these elements had been present to some degree throughout the nineteenth century, but in the Northeast they did not flourish until after the turn of the century. The wonder is not that they flowered, but rather that they remained such minor themes in American public life and, unlike anti-Negro sentiment, so limited in their over-all impact.

But for those American Jews coming to maturity in the first third of the twentieth century, American anti-Semitism was an important force. In some it stimulated the proud desire to assert Jewish identity and to promote Zionist causes, while in others it acted as a stimulus to renounce Jewish identity and assume characteristics antithetic to the anti-Semite's stereotype. Among the Jacobsons and Kruskals, for whom Judaism had ceased as a profound religious attachment, the latter tendency was most evident. But this "assimilationism" was always tempered by a lingering sense of Jewish identity and a refusal to deny family ties. They married Gentiles, but they did not convert. Their surnames remained intact.

For both families, 1910 was a kind of dividing line. Those who married before that year married among Baltic Jews, while those who married later, David Jacobson and Isaac, Joseph, and Eugene Kruskal, all chose native American mates from outside that circle. Isaac and Eugene Kruskal married women from Christian backgrounds. As Goldingen and Dorpat became more and more distant memories, success in America and accommodation to its standards became increasingly influential for their behavior. If there was anti-Semitism in America, there was also wide opportunity open to middle-class Jews like the Jacobsons and the Kruskals. Opportunity existed not only within their chosen occupations, but also in a broader cultural sense. Here there was no conscription, no established Church, and the public drew no official distinctions against Jews. Museums and libraries, theatres and public events were open to

them, and the political process encouraged their participation, wooing them with the rhetoric of popular democracy—"equality," "liberty," "justice." Who could turn his back on such a society, one whose material benefits were flowing and whose invitation to enter as a full member was repeatedly offered in a dozen ways? In all of the new families, from that of Moses and Fanny Trubek, who had married in 1895, to that of Joseph and Lillian Vorhaus Kruskal, who were married in 1918, the language of the home was English and the sense of nationality American.

The Trubeks left New York around 1901 and moved to Bergen County, New Jersey, first to Wood-Ridge, then to the predominantly German community of Carlstadt. There Moses Trubek established himself as a manufacturing chemist. His business was small at first, but when the First World War cut off German imports, Trubek Laboratories and the American chemical industry in general boomed. By this time Fanny and Moses had six children: Leo (born in 1896); Max (born in 1898); Paula (born in 1900); Herbert (born in 1903); Robert (1906–1965); and Walter (born in 1913). According to their Aunt Miriam, who visited frequently before 1908, it was a happy home. Leo and Max, the eldest, had lively senses of humor and were full of practical jokes. The others, who absorbed their mother's warmth and sensitivity, were sweet, playful children. The happiness of the household was abruptly halted, however, in 1914 when Fanny Jacobson Trubek died prematurely at the age of thirty-eight. Suddenly the family was disrupted. Leo, Max, and Paula were already in their teens, and their upbringing was largely complete. Now they assumed new and heavier family responsibilities. But Herbert was only eleven, Robert eight, and Walter, the baby, not even a year old. In crisis, the decision was made to have Fanny's brother Max Jacobson and his wife Meta take care of little Walter. Fourteen-year-old Paula, a high school girl, became mistress of the household until 1918, when Moses Trubek married again.

The impact of Fanny's death on the lives of her children can hardly be exaggerated. Although Moses Trubek was an affectionate father, full of stories for his rapt children, Fanny was sorely missed.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Paula Trubek Spevack letter to the author, October 5, 1970.

Moses was deeply absorbed in his work, thrifty, industrious, and authoritarian, and his standards of performance for himself and his children were high. Fanny's comforting warmth had brought a joy to the family that could not be replaced. But life went on. All of the children pursued education after high school, Leo winning a scholarship to Columbia, Max earning his undergraduate degree at Johns Hopkins (he lived with the Piroshes those years) and his medical degree from the University of Maryland, Paula studying textile design, and later marrying a textile manufacturer, and Herbert and Robert both becoming chemical engineers. Even the baby, Walter, who was formally adopted by the Jacobsons, later took a higher degree in chemistry.

John Nicholas Jacobson's children were much more fortunate in that both of their parents, John and Esther, survived their childhood. Arthur, the first child, was born in Brooklyn in 1899, followed by Leo in 1900, Shirley in 1903, Edward in 1904, and Florence in 1906. The family was supported by the stationery and printing business which John developed after leaving his original craft, bookbinding. Never rich, the Jacobsons owned their own house in Brooklyn and were comfortable. But they, too, had their sadness. Edward, the third son, had been a blue baby, and though unexpectedly he lived to maturity (1904–1934), he was retarded. He was taught to read and write, and he responded warmly to affection, but he remained the ward of his parents and his siblings all of his life. With Edward in their midst, the family drew inward, protectively. The drive and ambition of the Trubeks was scarcely visible. Arthur left home after the First World War and made his career independently in the printing business. At about the same time Leo, the second son, joined his father's company, where he would become a mainstay for more than half a century. Shirley also went to work for John N. Jacobson and Son, simultaneously taking courses in the evening, especially fine arts and painting in which she excelled. Some years later she married a social worker with a degree in Divinity. Florence, the youngest, took secretarial training, but she, too, was attracted to art and later worked for an art gallery. Toward the end of her life—she died in 1962—she became a practical nurse.

The household of Clara and Sigmar Pirosh was free of natural calamities, and with two lively and outgoing parents, it was a cheerful home. The three children, Bert (born in 1908); Robert (born in 1910); and Ruth (born in 1915), were raised in a home where Mama prepared memorable meals, Papa was forever cracking jokes, and cousins were frequently coming for extended, eagerly awaited visits. They lived in Baltimore, where Sigmar had moved from Chicago in 1909 to take over a cousin's medical practice largely composed of merchant seamen. Until the First World War curtailed overseas trade, it was a thriving practice, but then it languished. Dr. Pirosh, moreover, had a bedside manner more suited to sailors than genteel, middle-class patients. He could be brusque and had no time for currying his patients' favor. Once, indeed, he is said to have told a relative who was a patient to "jump in the lake," since she seemed to be suffering imaginary pains. In this instance not only she, but also her numerous clan, repaid him by finding another doctor. Never noted for his tact, Sig Pirosh seems to have been less than totally committed to his profession. His family, his cigars, his whiskey, baseball, football, horse racing, and a good joke all competed with medicine for his attention.

Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that neither of his sons pursued medical careers. Both attended the University of Maryland briefly and then went on to work in the Hollywood movie business. Bert became a film buyer for theatre chains, and Robert an Academy Award-winning writer and director. Ruthie, the beloved baby girl, worked as a secretary before marrying an attorney.

Miriam and her husband Herman Kruskal had a comparatively small family. They, like John Jacobson's family, remained in New York. Herman's business, while uneven from year to year, generally prospered, and he could afford repeated trips to Europe for both business and pleasure as well as private schools for his daughters Ruth Selde (1909-1957) and Dorothy (born in 1912). Between 1920 and 1927, he joined his brothers in the fur business and thereafter retired at the age of forty-six to manage his investments and properties. Ruth, who was married briefly to an attorney, aspired to become a singer after graduating high school. She never went to college, and later became a stenographer, engaging on the side in Left-

Wing politics. Dorothy married a businessman in 1935, one year after graduating from Radcliffe College where she had majored in history and literature.

Max Jacobson and his wife Meta had no children of their own after their marriage in 1909, but shortly after Fanny's death adopted Walter Trubek and raised him as their own. Max, a quiet man who had gone to work at the age of thirteen in 1892 to help support the family, never made very much money working as a book-keeper, and when he died in 1919 at the age of fifty, Meta was left alone with five-year-old Walter. Family contributions tided her over, and she later went to work, but of all the members of the family, her plight was hardest. Walter, however, was her joy, and he became a chemist.

David, Max's older brother, became the most prosperous of the Jacobsons. After knocking about as a boy in downtown New York business, he became a wholesale silk merchant and later a commercial banker. With his earnings, he and Martha bought a house and moved to the suburbs, to White Plains, after their marriage in 1912. There, in White Plains, all three of their children were born: Jean (1913); Margaret (1915); and David, Jr. (1919). David and Martha, both eager for intellectual life and cultural experience, raised their children in a home where books and studies counted. Their orientation toward achievement is visible in the fact that, of all the Jacobson cousins, this was the only family all of whose children, two girls and a boy, completed college, Jean at Barnard, Peggy [Margaret] at Berkeley, and David at M. I. T. (in architecture).⁶⁰ No doubt David Jacobson's financial status was a contributing factor, but his schoolmarm wife Martha and his own eagerness to learn and to meet new experience were more important.

Among the Kruskals, however, the standard of achievement was somewhat higher than among the Jacobsons. Moses David Kruskal

⁶⁰ Jean Jacobson married Winston Strong, a native of Portland, Oregon, who became a professor of agronomy. Peggy Jacobson married Nathan J. Roberts an attorney who became a law professor after retiring from the Army as a Brigadier General. Roberts, whose family name had been "Rabinowitz," was the nephew of Solomon Rabinowitz (1859-1916), who wrote in Yiddish under the pseudonym "Sholem Aleichem."

himself had been a much more ambitious, enterprising person than Isaac Jacobson, and after his death his boys grew up under their mother's eye in a keenly competitive atmosphere. The costs of their ambition and sibling rivalry were substantial. The Jacobson family never knew a period when brothers were not on speaking terms, but such splits developed among the Kruskals. And of the six Jacobson marriages, not one ended in divorce, whereas two of the four Kruskal marriages were terminated by divorce.

Isaac Kruskal, the eldest, married Bessie Reilly in 1913, five years after Herman's marriage to Miriam Jacobson. Over the violent objections of her father and the more restrained advice of her uncles who were priests, Bessie left Roman Catholicism to marry Isaac. Her reasons and feelings can only be guessed, but she must have been deeply committed to Dr. Isaac Kruskal. Her mother had made a similarly radical break from her own Scotch Presbyterian family years before by marrying an Irish Catholic. Bessie and Isaac, who never had children, did develop an extremely close and durable relationship, and their ethnic differences seem to have had no serious consequences.

Isaac, indeed, rose to the top of his profession. In 1908, he had a tubercular kidney removed and thereafter, in order to reduce the strain of general medical practice, became an anesthesiologist. But this specialty did not compel his interest, and so in 1910 his brothers Herman, Joe, and Eugene financed his study in ophthalmology at Vienna and London where Isaac remained, with one interruption, until the outbreak of the World War in 1914. On his return, the brothers financed his office equipment and supplied a year's nest egg with which to become established. Isaac rewarded their confidence, developing a fine practice and later going on to head the department of ophthalmology at Brooklyn Jewish Hospital.

William Kruskal (1883-1912) was a middle child, number three of the five who survived, and he was less enterprising and more gentle than any of his brothers. Whereas Isaac, the eldest, had used the family pharmacy as a springboard into the medical profession, William was more easygoing and content to remain a pharmacist. One summer, when he was twenty-three, he decided to practice his occupation at a resort where he could have a good time. He went

to Saratoga Springs, passing much of his leisure at the race track during the daytime and working late into the night. There he developed tuberculosis, and despite the vigorous efforts and large expenditures of his devoted older brother Herman, he never recovered. After six years at sanatoria in New York and Arizona, William died in 1912—"a great loss to Herman."⁶¹

Joseph, their younger brother, had a very different temperament. Eager, ambitious, quick, he early in life learned the "ways of the world" and mastered most of them. He left school at the age of thirteen because of a quarrel with his German teacher over some technical point, and then took a job with a manufacturer in 1899.⁶² The following year he went "on the road" for the first time, and soon was doing it regularly. Bright, articulate, with a sharp eye for shortcuts, he rapidly became an effective salesman. Within a decade, he had established a business of his own, with a partner, much as his older brother Herman had done. But Joe, still a bachelor and carrying less family responsibility, was a good deal more "sporty" than Herman, and it was Joe who around 1908 purchased the first car in either family—a racy Stutz Bearcat.

When the youngest of the Kruskal boys, Eugene, graduated the City College of New York in 1909, he had a brief stint teaching high school Greek, but Joe soon convinced him to come to work for him. Before long they established their own wholesale furriers firm, Kruskal and Kruskal. But Joe and Gene both lived well and had some difficulty accumulating capital. Moreover, their business as fur wholesalers made heavy short-term demands on capital, inventories

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, MJK, Letters and Memoirs, memo on AHK and siblings. Martin David Kruskal in a letter to the author of Dec. 5, 1970, asks: "Was William's death a greater blow to Herman than to the other brothers? I have at least a slight reason to think it was a significant blow to my father; he once expressed to me concern that I might get TB and die like his brother." Moreover, it should be noted that Joseph named his first son after his deceased brother. But while there is no way of evaluating the meaning of this death to the brothers, it is true that while William was ill it was Herman who assumed responsibility for him.

⁶² The story of the quarrel with the German teacher comes from Martin David Kruskal letter to the author, Dec. 5, 1970. Before leaving school Joseph achieved some distinction, having been awarded a copy of *The Travels of Marco Polo* (letter of William H. Kruskal to the author, Nov. 28, 1970.)

being as valuable as they were. Thus in 1912 Joe and Gene invited Herman to join them. They had an eye on his capital, which was very substantial and would help their credit with bankers, and they also believed their line would be less of a strain than manufacturing—Herman's work—since wholesalers had no worries concerning labor and unions. Joe and Gene, both excellent salesmen, sold Herman on the idea, and he agreed to join them. Later he had second thoughts and changed his mind, but since he had first agreed, he felt duty-bound to share his capital and so divided it, lending half to his brothers at considerable risk as well as damage to his own opportunities for expansion. Twenty years earlier, in 1892, Moses David Kruskal had considered the same problem in deciding whether to join in business with a close friend or relative and had concluded that in such matters "it is best to maintain a distance between oneself and his good friends."⁸³ Now, in 1912, Herman followed the same path, while Joe and Gene worked together. Eight years later Herman would again change his mind and this time actually join Kruskal and Kruskal.

In 1915, Eugene Kruskal took a cruise in the Mediterranean, and on the ship he met a twenty-three-year-old St. Louis debutante, Helen d'Aubert Hall, who had studied in Rome with Maria Montessori. Bright, eager, and active, she captivated Eugene, and she was impressed by his good looks and charm. It was a shipboard romance which flowered, and in June, 1916, they were married. Eugene, at twenty-eight, was a successful furrier, and Helen, at twenty-four, was a liberated, stylish American woman. Her family were longtime New Yorkers and New Englanders, attorneys and merchants, who had moved west in the mid-nineteenth century. They had always been Protestants, but religion was not very important either to Helen or to Eugene. They were part of the secular world, and their interests and tastes were nonsectarian. In July, 1918, two years after their marriage, they had a daughter. She was named Elizabeth Eugenia—for Helen's mother Elizabeth Beardslee and for Gene himself. Betty Kruskal would graduate from Wellesley in 1939 and marry a professor of romance languages immediately thereafter.

Joseph Kruskal, the last son to marry, also went outside the tradi-

⁸³ Moses David Kruskal to Rosa Jaffe Kruskal, New York City, January 13, 1892.

tional circle. His bride in October, 1918, was the petite, vivacious Lillian Vorhaus. He was thirty-three, she barely twenty, and the differences in their ages and outlook were to strain their marriage almost from the outset. Lillian, a native New York Jewess of Austrian, Hungarian, and Czech ancestry, was the daughter of Bernard Vorhaus, an attorney who never practiced law but instead made his career importing furs. Lillian was enthusiastic about music and art, and such decorative interests fitted Joe's idea of a wife, but when, after her children were born, Lillian wanted to join her husband in business, Joe was vexed. As he saw it, Lillian should involve herself in child-rearing, service work, amateur theater, and the like—occupations that were appropriate for a suburban matron. Lillian, confined by her husband to a role not entirely to her liking, took special pleasure in child-rearing and after her husband's death developed her own enterprises while revelling in the role of *materfamilias* to her numerous children and grandchildren.⁶⁴

Whatever the tensions that ultimately led to the divorce of Joe and Lillian Kruskal, child-rearing soon became a central concern of their marriage. In 1919, just a year after they were married, their first son was born, and they named him William Henry after Joe's deceased brother. Two years later, in 1921, Molly Louise was born, named for Lillian's mother Molly Grossman. In 1923, Rosaly was born, named for Rosa Kruskal. In 1925, Martin David was born, named for Moses David Kruskal, and then in 1928, Joseph Bernard, Jr.⁶⁵ Though they lived in a modern suburb, New Rochelle, with five children, Joe and Lillian had the largest, least "modern" family of all the Kruskals. In its structure it more resembled a family begun in the 1890's, like Fanny J. Trubek's or John Jacobson's, than a family of the 1920's. But both Joe and Lillian enjoyed their

⁶⁴ This interpretation is based partly on the views presented by Martin David Kruskal in his letter to the author of Dec. 5, 1970.

⁶⁵ In *ibid.*, Martin David Kruskal reports: "I was named M. David after Dad's father. In fact Dad wanted to name me Moses David, but mother didn't like the name Moses (because it sounded too Jewish? that's my guess), and prevailed to have me named Martin after her brother, by whose children I am called Martin David to this day. The rest of the family calls me David, the 'compromise' adopted by my parents for daily use."

offspring together, and the children seem to have helped maintain the marriage.

Joe's drive and Lillian's creativity were reflected in the educational achievements of all the children. William, the eldest, graduated *summa cum laude* from Harvard and then from Columbia with a doctorate in mathematical statistics, going on to become a Professor of Statistics at the University of Chicago. Martin David, the second son, went first to the University of Chicago, and then took his Ph.D. at New York University, subsequently becoming Professor of Astrophysical Sciences and Applied Mathematics at Princeton. Joseph, Jr., also did his undergraduate work at Chicago, then a doctorate at Princeton, going on to work as a mathematician at Bell Telephone Laboratories. The girls, too, Molly and Rosaly, graduated from college, one with a B.A., the other a B.M. from the Oberlin College Conservatory. Both were to marry businessmen. Significantly, none of the children chose a career with Kruskal and Kruskal as Joe had deeply wished. Joseph Kruskal was stimulated by the challenge of making money in a competitive world, and he was unusually gifted at it. But if he was committed to it, and there is some doubt, his interest was not transmitted to his children. Only his desire to excel did they share.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ For several years following the Second World War, the eldest son, William, tried a career at Kruskal and Kruskal, but soon returned to mathematics. Martin David Kruskal in his letter to the author of Dec. 5, 1970, comments: "I for one never received from Dad the slightest indication that he would have liked me to go into the business, though I do recall on several occasions mother telling me that he would like one of his sons, at least, to do so. Whether she got the idea from anything he ever said or merely romanced it I have no idea. I think Bill has a different impression in his own case, though, from a discussion with him, I have the impression that even in his will and such arrangements there is nothing concrete to suggest that Dad was concerned with this issue. I don't really believe he was all that attached to making money (per se); my recollection is that he was concerned that his children be able to make a decent living, not that they become especially successful in a worldly sense. In any case I never had the slightest feeling that he objected to my own pursuit of academic interests, nor that I was in any way 'rejecting his priorities.' I can remember how proud of and gratified by Bill's numerous academic awards and recognitions he was—also more generally by the mere fact that his children hadn't 'turned out badly' like those of some of his friends and acquaintances. . . . Did you know that Dad considered retiring at a quite early age? In a serious way, I mean—so much so that the year before I was born he 'experimented' with

FAMILY PATTERNS, 1900-1930

The most striking feature of the Jacobson and Kruskal families during their first full generation in America is their continuing commitment to bourgeois values and a bourgeois life style. In this, at least, the continuity with the values of the first immigrants and even the European ancestors was unbroken. Secure, comfortable families in secure, comfortable homes, education and respectability, these were the common denominators. Far from being unusual in this regard, the aspirations of the Jacobsons and Kruskals were typical and represent merely one microcosmic example of the kinds of motives which spurred hundreds of thousands of families in Europe and America.

What was unusual was not the nature of their goals, but the degree of success which they met in achieving them. Certainly they enjoyed a head start, beginning in the middle class of immigrants who were neither illiterate nor poverty-stricken, but their accomplishments were also substantial. Several amassed capital sums of hundreds of thousands of dollars, and they could all afford to provide their children with more than the average level of education. In the period before the Second World War, college degrees were still a luxury enjoyed by a comparatively small percentage of the population—not more than 10 percent even as late as 1940. The fact that roughly half of the children born in the first generation completed at least four years of college is a significant indicator of the success both families had in establishing themselves in America. If one looks at the Kruskals alone, the statistics are even more startling, since seven out of eight completed college, and five of the seven

retirement by taking the whole family (i.e. household, with nurse, governess, etc. included; maid, I think, too) abroad and settling in a hotel in Nice (the Negresco, where by coincidence Laura and I were assigned when we attended the International Congress of Mathematicians in Nice this Sept.), from which mother and Dad made various excursions throughout Europe and elsewhere, I believe. . . . This to me does not suggest a man obsessed to any extent with money and power. The fact that he couldn't stick it merely means, in my interpretation, that he got bored."

later took higher degrees.⁸⁷ In life style as well, both families enjoyed a high standard—the European tours, country houses, country clubs, and household servants characteristic of the upper end of the middle-class spectrum. There was, moreover, a perceptible shift from commerce and manufacturing to the learned professions—a shift with ambiguous consequences in terms of status, since the former were more rewarding financially, while the latter carried greater prestige. In any case, they never broke out of the middle class entirely into the topmost echelon of American society where wealth and power are combined and endure beyond a single generation. Though their levels of income and education rose, together with their consumption patterns, some of the rise was merely part of a general rise and proportional to the level at which they had begun. For a few individuals, the rise was fairly spectacular, but for the group it was moderate.

One aspect of the bourgeois mentality which pervaded this generation in making its life in America was its profound involvement in personal concerns. One's occupation, family, and leisure generally bounded the horizons of members of both families. The connections with Europe rapidly melted away. After Loeb Jacobson's death in 1896, Isaac Jacobson's ties were ended. Pauline Mandelstamm Jacobson had brothers in Russia, but both of the physicians, David and Leopold Mandelstamm, died in the nineties—Leopold of tuberculosis and David in a duel while he was serving with the Russian army in the Caucasus. Only Moritz Mandelstamm survived, but after the Soviet Revolution of 1917 it became almost impossible to maintain connections even had the desire been there. Among the Kruskals there were significant efforts, largely confined to the period between the First World War and the Depression. Nicholas Kruskal, who now operated a pharmaceutical laboratory, organized a Kruskal Fund, dunning himself and his nephews, Kruskal and Jaffe, \$10 per month, the money being used to aid sick or needy family members on the Continent, from Paris to Leningrad. The fund was actively operated through the 1920's and the 1930's, but the Depres-

⁸⁷ Of the seven who went to college, at least four were elected to Phi Beta Kappa and several were graduated with Latin honors.

sion reduced its magnitude, and the migration in 1928 of Nicholas Kruskal to Tel Aviv, where he died, removed its founder and chief impetus.⁶⁸ For the most part, both the parents and the children of the new generation had little interest in maintaining past connections which grew more and more distant with each passing year. Today and tomorrow were much more important than yesterday and the day before yesterday.

A similar bourgeois preoccupation with immediate personal concerns kept both families out of public affairs and indeed out of most external institutional involvements, whether they lived in New York, Baltimore, or New Jersey. Like most middle-class Americans, they voted regularly and discussed politics at home. They all admired first Theodore Roosevelt and then Woodrow Wilson, but that was the limit of their participation. The private, personal sector absorbed their energies and attention, as was characteristic of most Americans. When the Jacobsons and the Kruskals regarded public affairs at all, it was usually from afar, with little sense of personal involvement or active commitment. They made donations to charity, to Jewish philanthropies before 1910 and later more broadly, but the donations were to aid the sick and the poor, not to promote political causes.⁶⁹ Politics and public service were not their area of responsibility. Not until the third and fourth generations would ac-

⁶⁸ The Kruskal fund was perhaps maintained beyond 1940. William H. Kruskal reports in his letter to the author of Nov. 28, 1970: "I'm not absolutely sure of the linkage, but my Uncle Eugene maintained a Kruskal fund that my sibs and I continued and that still, I believe, has some contingent viability." Between 1900 and 1920 it is apparent that Nicholas Kruskal served as a leader in maintaining family connections. Reva S. Olch reports that her mother (Gail Gertrude Kruskal Sussman) often visited Nicholas in New York and also went "up to the fur emporium to see Joseph who called us his 'mishpocha'." They also had their eyes examined by Dr. Isaac Kruskal. After Nicholas departed for Tel Aviv the connections collapsed. Mrs. Olch reports: "My real belief is that Cousin Nicky held all together" (letter to the author of March 18, 1971). More recently William H. Kruskal has been interested in preserving family connections and maintained a sporadic correspondence with Nicholas' daughter Victoria K. Youdin in Tel Aviv.

⁶⁹ According to MJK, family members opposed all parochial schools, including Jewish ones. It is notable, however, that the pharmacist Nicholas Kruskal, who settled in Tel Aviv in the late 1920's, willed his house as a charitable bequest to the University of Tel Aviv on the death of his daughter Victoria Youdin.

tive engagement in public affairs become visible to any significant degree and then as part of a general reform awakening among American youth in the 1960's.

Other institutional commitments were similarly limited. Among the eight sons of Isaac Jacobson and Moses David Kruskal, only two joined synagogues, both Reform—John Jacobson in Brooklyn, and Joseph Kruskal in New Rochelle. David Jacobson and his wife became members of the Ethical Culture Society, as did Herman and Miriam Jacobson Kruskal, and Miriam also joined the Child Study Association as a young matron. But almost without exception these links were partial, temporary, and not passed on to the children. Assimilationist in many ways, neither the Jacobsons nor the Kruskals ever became “joiners,” or absorbed themselves in group activities.

In the decade 1920–1930, the older generation passed away. Pauline Mandelstamm Jacobson died in 1922 at the age of seventy-two, and in 1924 the sixty-two-year-old Rosa Kruskal died. She had been active to the end, and the new passport she had just secured for still another European tour was never used. Isaac Jacobson lived on until 1930. In many respects, old age was easier for him than the first years had been. Now his refusal to speak English and his reluctance to compete in the world no longer mattered. He could talk politics and philosophy with his nieces and nephews, and John had found a place for him as a bookkeeper in his shop, so he went there several mornings a week. Pauline and he had always lived near Miriam, and after Pauline's death, Miriam looked after him. He delighted in his grandchildren, and the affection he had felt for his own children when they were little was renewed. When his health deteriorated in 1926, it was believed best that he move in with Clara Jacobson Pirosh in Baltimore, so that Dr. Pirosh could supervise his care. There, at the age of eighty-two, he died quietly and peacefully, with the anxieties of youth and middle age already laid to rest.⁷⁰ With his death in 1930, the last link to the life of centuries was broken. He had been the last one raised within the Pale of Zagare and educated in a ghetto yeshiva.

⁷⁰ Judgment based on MJK recollections and on Isaac Jacobson's last letter to MJK written (in German) the day before his death (this letter is in the author's possession).

FAMILY PATTERNS, 1930-1970

With the passing of time, generational lines have blurred to a point where each generation no longer possesses temporal cohesion.⁷¹ Even in the first generation, the space between Fanny Jacobson Trubek's first child (born in 1896) and Joseph B. Kruskal's last child (born in 1928) was thirty-two years, a time-span longer than the twenty to twenty-five years normally associated with a single generation. Moreover, the number of families has multiplied to a point where unraveling individual stories is neither feasible nor rewarding as family history within the present framework. After all, the first generation born in America was only one-half Jacobson or Kruskal, and by the second generation, everyone within the family was only one-quarter. At this level, the Jacobson or Kruskal identity is largely conventional, an accident of family name. As a result, the only generalizations which can have any meaning are those with a

⁷¹ The interpretation of the direction of family development that follows is largely conventional. The assumptions on which it is based are open to question, however. Martin David Kruskal comments in his letter of Dec. 5, 1970: "I certainly don't question that there has been a tremendous change in the role of the family, one of the major theses your story illustrates. But I do wonder a bit what the effect is of tracing 'downward' the descendants of a single man and seeing what happened to his progeny and how they spread out geographically, etc. Tracing backwards, i.e. 'upward,' one gets the impression of great immobility, since the family stayed in the same (Baltic) region for generations or centuries (supposedly—how definite is that?). But going upward there is only a single line that is at all easily traceable, the male line which keeps the family name; and even if you could trace both sides there would be only two per generation, a doubling, in contrast to the case of descendants where there are many more than two children per generation. This may explain, at least in part, the seeming contrast between the static, confined, immobile, traditional, conservative, etc., etc. families of our ancestors some generations back, and the assimilationist, individualistic, mobile, etc., etc., families of the present. If you would choose one of our ancestors of, say, two centuries ago, in the Baltic area, and trace his descendants downward, are you sure you wouldn't get the same impression of explosive diversification, etc., as in your recent history? I would at least expect to see (with fairly high probability) numerous branches splitting off (from the 'main' line), spreading out geographically, quite possibly assimilating to some noticeable extent, even intermarrying perhaps with Christians. While the distances of geographic dispersion would undoubtedly not be so great as in modern times, relative to the technology of the period they might be just as significant. What I am suggesting, in short, is that the necessities of historical methodology *may* be introducing tremendous bias into your generalizations."

relatively broad base, derived from the experience of more than a handful of family members.

Viewed from this perspective, the history of the families in the past forty years seems to be quite typical of the American upper middle class. Family members have, with rare exceptions, remained secure in their social status, and in the post-Second World War period virtually all have attended college. There has been the marked geographic dispersion characteristic of the class. The concentrations in the metropolitan New York region and in California are comparatively high, but there are also a couple of dozen living elsewhere, in New England, in the Middle West, and Britain. The size of individual families has generally decreased, again following patterns common to the class. Both families, anonymous enough in 1870, have remained anonymous, and no one individual of the Jacobson or Kruskal name, however competent, has as yet made any very distinctive mark on his generation, even within a given profession. Within the past decade, a diminution of the conventional forms of achievement motivation has been visible, but this, too, coincides with a general American phenomenon. One is tempted, therefore, to say merely that the Jacobson and Kruskal families, having risen into the upper middle class, have become typical.

But there is one area, at least, where their behavior pattern seems striking in a significant way. Of the first group of nine marriages (1895–1918) made by the sons and daughters of Isaac Jacobson and Moses David Kruskal, seven were with Jews and only two with Christians. But of the next round of marriages (1923–1957), fifteen were with Christians and only ten with Jews. Although statistics on intermarriage have not been compiled which would permit detailed comparison, it is apparent that neither the Jacobsons nor the Kruskals were typical in their loose association with Judaism and their readiness to melt into the American melting pot. The assimilationist urge has been powerful and has operated at the expense of Jewish identity. By 1970, only a very few family members were practicing Jews, and an almost equal number were practicing Christians. The great majority, on the other hand, had moved away from formal religion entirely. This, too, reflects a general phenomenon, but in this instance it is exaggerated in its extent. One reason perhaps is that both families were ethnically detached from New

York Judaism's dominant groups. Coming from Latvia and Estonia, they were distinctly outside the German-Jewish community, but since they had become Germanicized for a generation or two in Goldingen and Dorpat, they also found the Yiddish culture of Russian Jews alien. As a result, the dynamics of ethnicity within the Jewish population reinforced the movement away from traditional connections that had begun years before.⁷²

RETROSPECT: THE MEANING OF FAMILY EXPERIENCE, 1870-1970

When Moses David Kruskal and Isaac Jacobson left the Baltic region and the Russian Empire, they acted primarily for their children's well-being. Both middle-aged, they wanted to protect their children from the hazards a Jew faced in Russia and to provide them with greater opportunity. They could not see into the distant future; they saw only the prospects which lay immediately ahead in the Romanov empire—repression, declining status, a contraction of their liberties. Had they foreseen the Soviet Revolution and the two world wars, their decisions would have been confirmed. They were, in 1890 and 1891, wiser than they knew. Of all the countries they might have chosen, the United States turned out to be best suited to their aspirations. They were not Zionists or "political" men; for each, his first interest was the well-being of his immediate family.

Within a generation their aspirations had been substantially realized. Their offspring enjoyed better material status, greater personal liberty, and broader freedom for individual development than their counterparts in Russia. The goals of the fathers were fulfilled beyond their expectations. But it was these same elements of American life which destroyed the delicate balance which had helped to provide family cohesion and identity. Already in the second half of the nineteenth century, the family was facing serious challenges as an institution, but it was still, for the Jacobsons and Kruskals, the Mandelstamms and Jaffes, a vital, cohesive organism which provided lifelong security—psychological, social, and economic. In

⁷² This interpretation was suggested by Professor Helen L. Horowitz of Union College. The Piroshes in Baltimore found that they were in precisely this position—regarded as outsiders by both the German and Russian Jewish communities.

America, however, it gradually lost most of its positive functions. In the early years, family members called on their kinfolk when they were in need—in personal crises and also in business dealings.⁷³ But in time these needs were provided for in other ways, by voluntary friendships and social institutions—banks, insurance companies, social agencies—and so the extended family became an empty husk. Its strength, both for nutrition and constraint, was soon exhausted. Even the nuclear families which survived lost many of their functions. Peer groups replaced the family as sources for children's norms, and parental authority lost much of its weight as well as its rationale. Nuclear families survived, but largely as incubators for individual development rather than as conduits for the transmission of familial norms. Only in their individualism and assimilationism can parental norms be said to have survived; yet even here the story is ambiguous. Between 1870 and 1910, marriages had been contracted between people with family connections, and parental consent played on active part. Today, however, parents play virtually no role in marital choices; they are spectators, and this most crucial decision from the perspective of family identity and continuity has been entirely individualized.

It is this pervasive individualism, the primacy of individual values and choices, which traditional families held in check. Moses David Kruskal and Isaac Jacobson, themselves operating under individualist influence, could not anticipate its development of virtually unrestrained power. The consequences of individualism, challenging, rewarding, and dangerous, will dominate the history of these families in the next century. Ironically, rampant individualism and the fragmentation of the family have created a modest interest in family history. A longing to discover their "roots" and to maintain some association with them is a reaction to the individualistic, socially fragmented environment of contemporary America. But such a family history is also an anachronism. It is a testament to a once vital institution which embraced our grandparents, but has died with us.

⁷³ In a conversation, July 25, 1970, between the author, MJK, and Isaac Jaffe this theme of familial interdependence was emphasized, together with the realization that it could also lead to misunderstandings, broken promises, rivalry, and hostility. It is no wonder, then, that people often preferred to avoid intra-familial social services, since the emotional cost was often high.