

OUR OLD-WORLD HERITAGE

THE JOURNEYS OF OUR REINSTEINS, EISNERS, AND FRIEDMANS



DAVE FORREST

DAVE FORREST

Our Old-World Heritage

The Journeys of Our Reinsteins, Eisners, and Friedmans

Copyright © 2020 by Dave Forrest

First edition

This book was professionally typeset on Reedsy.

Find out more at reedsy.com

*For my precious grandchildren.
May you enjoy exploring all the stories from your varied heritage
and write your own happy adventures on life, too.*

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ii
1 The Reinstains from Posen	1
2 The Eisners from Bohemia	4
3 Our Gold Rush Roots	7
4 San Francisco - "American Jerusalem"	10
5 The Friedmans from the Russian Pale	13
6 The Furniture Friedmans of Troy, NY	18
7 Max Friedman - "On our feet once again..."	21
8 Julia Friedman - "Matches are made in Heaven..."	25
9 Helen and Henry	29
10 The Friedmans - The Next Generation	32
11 Nanny Helen	35
12 Our Heritage	37
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	40
<i>About the Author</i>	42
<i>Also by Dave Forrest</i>	43

Preface

Almost a decade ago, my cousin Rick and I met for a meal. During the evening, we discussed a common ancestor, our great-grandfather Marx “Max” Friedman (1854-1934). He immigrated from Russia, establishing a successful San Francisco furniture business. Family lore had it that Max swapped his long Russian surname for Friedman, which he spotted on a cracker billboard.

Max’s son Henry Friedman (1878-1948) married our grandmother, Helen Eisner (1889-1963). Rick shared memories of our Nanny Helen, who lived nearby on the Peninsula. We both remembered a photograph of our grandfather, Henry, sitting on a camel with pyramids in the background. Somewhere was a copy of a speech given by Max, but neither of us could recall where. Rick and I were kindred cousins when it came to losing track of important pieces of family history.

After our meal, I decided it was high time to fill in the gaps of our vague family origins. The next day, I paid \$14.95 and logged onto Ancestry.com. Thus, began my quest to learn more about our old-world heritage.

Tucked in boxes in the garage, I recovered the speech by Max Friedman and a family tree created by Rick’s dad, Milton Silverman (1910-1997). Happily, the search for our roots became a family project. I reconnected with lost and found Friedman cousins, the children of: Margaret (1912-1993), Mil-

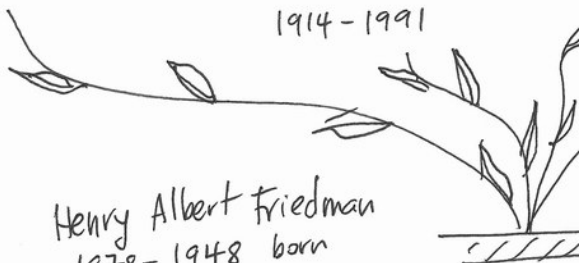
ton (1914-1991), Virginia (1915-1980), and Beatrice (1919-1997). They generously shared stories and photos from our past.

Here is what we found about the journeys of our ancestors, the Reinsteins, Eisners, and Friedmans, too.

Margaret Friedman
1912 - 1993

Milton Friedman/
Forrest

1914 - 1991



Henry Albert Friedman
1878 - 1948 born
San Francisco

Marx Friedman
1850 - 1934
imm. year 1870

Julia Schlomsky
1855 - 1924
marriage yr.
1873

Lewis Friedman
1819 - 1897
Suwalki,
Russia

Cyril Davis
1821 - 1883
Russia

Jacob Schlomsky
1825 - 1883
Kalwail,
Russia

Hannah Lichtenstein
1830 - 1877
Kalwail,
Russia

Virginia Friedman

1915-1980

Beatrice Friedman

1919-1997



Helen Eisner

1889-1963

born San Francisco

Milton Eisner

1860-1921

born Folsom, CA



Lena Reinstein

1861-1924

born Visalia, CA.



Daniel Eisner Mary

1825-1870 1831

Bohemia
(Czech)

Bohemia



Oscar Reinstein Hannah Jacobs

1827-1906 1834

Posen,
Prussia

Posen,
Prussia

The Reinsteins from Posen

Before Max Friedman abandoned his name at the water's edge in 1870, Helen Eisner's grandparents immigrated to California during the Gold Rush in the 1850's. Oscar and Augusta Reinstein were from Posen, in the German kingdom of Prussia.

Two fifths of Prussian Jews lived in Posen, but Jews were only 6% of the Prussian population. Many of these Jews were poor. According to the *Jewish Virtual Library*, "the majority of Prussian Jewry lived in rural and semi-rural conditions, peddling, shop- and inn keeping commerce, and livestock trade were the main occupations." Prussia had a mixed record in the treatment of its Jewish citizens, "in spite of noteworthy cultural, economic, and social achievement of Prussian Jews within the German Empire, Prussia retained a specific, conservative, anti-Jewish, social and political attitudes."¹ It is likely the Reinsteins emigrated from Prussia to escape poverty and discrimination, immigrating to

¹ The Jewish Virtual Library, *Virtual Jewish World: Prussia*, www.jewishvirtual-library.org.

the US to improve their economic prospects.

Oscar Reinstein (1824-1906) was born in on November 15, 1824. According to his passport, he was only 5 feet 1/2 inch tall, with a round face, gray-hazel eyes and a dark complexion. He emigrated to the US in 1846. Oscar sailed from Hamburg Germany, stopping in London and disembarking in New York. He traveled to San Francisco in 1852 after the California Gold Rush had begun, becoming a naturalized US citizen in 1856. The Reinsteins first settled in Visalia, California, where Oscar was a merchant.

The Reinsteins were part of an early immigration of German speaking Jews to California in the 1850's. Although their numbers were small in comparison with the larger immigration of Russian Jews after 1880, their influence was considerable in our new state.

The names of these Jewish pioneers are well known today. Levi Strauss sold dry goods to gold miners, eventually establishing a world wide clothing empire. The Haas family built grocery stores, the Walters sold carpet and furniture, and Joseph Sutro bought real estate. He created the Sutro baths and was elected the first Jewish mayor of a major American city in 1894.

THE REINSTEINS FROM POSEN



The German Empire in 1871. The Reinsteins were from Posen in Prussia.

The Eisners from Bohemia

Our Eisners were also part of the Jewish immigration to California during the Gold Rush. Daniel Eisner was born in 1823. He and his wife, Mary, immigrated from Bohemia in 1852. Bohemia was a kingdom in the Austro-Hungarian empire, now part of the modern day Czech Republic.

Jews suffered discrimination in Bohemia, but by the mid 19th century were allowed to live and work where they wished. The Eisners emigrated after the 1848 Revolution, a turbulent period of nationalist revolts against the Hapsburg monarchy. They headed for California after the discovery of gold in 1849.

Daniel and Mary Eisner sailed from Germany to London, boarding the ship *Devonshire* to the US. It was a modern ship for its day, built in 1848 with three masts and capable of carrying over eleven hundred tons. The couple arrived in New York Harbor on March 27, 1852.

In the mid 1850's the Eisners lived in Folsom, California. The Museum of California described the placer mining area in the 1850's, "This district is in northeastern Sacramento County. It was mainly a dredging field that extended from the town of

Folsom southwest along the south side of the American River to Fair Oaks...”² Daniel was a merchant selling goods to gold miners, and he bought land, as well.

The Eisners had seven boys: Jacob (1850-1913), David (1852-1923), Charles (1856-1930), Marcus (1857), Milton (1860-1921), Philip (1861-1942), and Herman (1867-1936). Milton Sidney Eisner was our grandmother’s father.

The Eisners spent the next decade in Folsom until they moved to San Francisco in the late 1860’s. In 1867, the San Francisco Directory lists Daniel Eisner’s occupation as merchant, his family dwelling on 1019 Mission St. In 1869 the Eisners lived at 306 Sixth St.

Daniel Eisner died in 1870. He was only 47 years old. His will showed that he was financially successful. He not only owned property in Folsom, but a lot in Plainfield in Yolo County near Davis and real estate in Ellis Station, in what is now Tracy. This property was sold at his death. The proceeds went to his sole heir, his wife Mary. The will also shows she inherited \$10,000 from a life insurance policy.

² Oakland Museum of California, *Gold Districts of California*, <http://explore.museumca.org/goldrush/dist-folsom.html>



The Austrian Empire in 1850. The Eisners came from Bohemia, shown top left.

Our Gold Rush Roots

Both the Eisners and the Reinsteins came during the Gold Rush, seeking a better life in California's Central Valley. They worked in retail, providing goods and services to the gold miners. While the Eisners settled in Folsom, the Reinsteins first went to Visalia in the San Joaquin Valley.

Helen Eisner's mom was Lena Reinstein (1861-1924), born in Visalia. Visalia was first founded in 1852, in an oak grove called Four Creeks. During the 1850's miners searched for gold nearby in the Kern River. The city brochure described its expansion, "Visalia grew steadily in the decades which followed, spurred on by gold rushes, livestock, railroads, hydroelectrical power and irrigation water, which was good for agriculture."³

Although it was the largest settlement between Stockton and Los Angeles, Visalia only had a population of 548 in 1860. Miners did not find the gold they hoped for. Nevertheless, the town received a boost of commercial activity when John

³ City of Visalia, *Historic Visalia Walking Trail*, <https://www.visalia.city/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=7203>

Butterfield's Overland Mail Stage chose Visalia as a timetable stop on the St. Louis-to-San Francisco route. In the early 1860's, at the outbreak of the Civil War, Visalians had divided loyalties. Fearing southern sympathizers, the government stationed Union troops nearby.

In Visalia, Oscar and Augusta had four children, Jacob (1854-1911), Adeline (1856-1923), Mary (1858-1945), and Lena (1861-1924). Sadly, Augusta Reinstein died in 1863, still a young mother. She is buried in Hills of Eternity Memorial Park cemetery in Colma, California.

In the 1860's the Reinsteins relocated to San Francisco. Oscar remarried Hannah Jacobs (b. 1834). The fifth Reinstein child was born in 1864, presumably named in memory of Oscar deceased wife, Augusta Reinstein (1864-1914).



Lena Reinstein was born in Visalia in 1861. She married Milton Eisner and was Helen Eisner's mother.

San Francisco - “American Jerusalem”

Both the Reinstein and the Eisner families headed for the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1860’s. Their families valued education, sending their sons and daughters to Bay Area schools and colleges.

For example, Oscar Reinstein’s oldest child, Jacob, attended the very first class of the University of California, Berkeley. He graduated in 1873. He and his classmates were dubbed *The Twelve Apostles*, becoming important leaders in a growing California. Jacob became a San Francisco attorney, representing prominent Bay Area persons. In 1895, Reinstein was appointed as Regent of the University of California. He worked with Phoebe Hearst in promoting the expansion of the university at the turn of the 20th century.

Jacob’s younger sister, Lena, attended Denman Grammar School in San Francisco. She went to Girls’ High School, graduating on May 23, 1878. Four years later Lena earned her teaching certificate at the California Kindergarten Normal School, class of 1882. She became a kindergarten teacher.

The best description of our colorful great-grandmother comes

from Rick's Dad, Milt Silverman, who wrote in the 1980's: "Lena Reinstein (Muzzy), born in Visalia, married her brother's law partner Milton Eisner. Far ahead of her times, she was a teacher, a cooking expert, a cigar-smoking supporter of the arts, a close friend of such people as Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Isadora and Morris Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn. She guided the education of her daughter, Helen. When Lena learned she was dying from cancer, she took Helen for a final visit to Europe and then across Russia and Siberia on the Trans-Siberian Express." You can read more about Jacob and Lena Reinstein in my book, *Our Reinstein Roots*.⁴

Milton Sidney Eisner (1860-1921) also attended Cal, graduating in 1883. He worked as a lawyer in Jacob Reinstein's law office. Milt Silverman described Lena's future husband, Milton Eisner, as a "romantic man-about-town." We surmise that Jacob introduced his law partner to his younger sister, Lena. The couple courted in the early 1880's. They married in 1884. Their first child was Milton Daniel Eisner (1886-1959). Our grandmother, Helen Eisner, was born three years later in 1889.

San Francisco was a special place for our ancestors, with freedoms and opportunities for Jewish immigrants and their children unlike other parts of the country. According to the summary of the film, *American Jerusalem: Jews and the Making of San Francisco*, "In San Francisco they [Jewish immigrants] found their Promised Land. In the middle of the 19th century, San Francisco's infrastructure and institutions were not yet built. Therefore, in stark contrast to cities elsewhere in America, where Jews had to fit into an existing power structure, many

⁴ Forrest, Dave, *Our Reinstein Roots*, <http://daveforrest.net/ancestors/our-reinstein-roots/>

Jewish pioneers built those institutions, becoming prominent merchants, politicians, and civic leaders.”⁵



Helen Eisner (1889–1963)

⁵ “American Jerusalem: Jews and the Making of San Francisco.” *American Jerusalem: Jews and the Making of San Francisco*, www.american-jerusalem.com/.

The Friedmans from the Russian Pale

In 1870, the year that Daniel Eisner died, Marx “Max” Friedman set sail for the United States. He did not grow up in Prussia or Bohemia, but lived in the Russian Pale of Settlement. He landed in Manhattan, and set up shop with his brothers in Troy, New York.

Max Friedman was born on July 10, 1850 to Louis Friedman (1820) and Cyril Davis (1821). Max’s father was a bookbinder. The couple had six children: Sarah (1845), Marx (1850), Joseph (1853), Bessie (1856), Hirsh (1859), and Mendel (1861). Max was born in Suwalki in the Polish part of Russia. Suwalki is currently in northeastern Poland, just nineteen miles from the Lithuanian border. By 1857, it had a population of 11,257.

A biographical sketch of Max Friedman appeared in the book, *Western Jewry, An Account of the Achievements of Jews and Judaism in California*.⁶ In it Martin Meyer wrote, “Marx Friedman was

⁶ Meyer, Martin A. *Western Jewry, An Account of the Achievements of Jews and Judaism in California, Including Eulogies and Biographies*, “The Jews in California,” 1916.

educated in his native country until the age of eighteen at which time he was a teacher of Hebrew for two years. He moved to New York at the age of twenty...where he became engaged in mercantile pursuits.”

Marx grew up in the Pale of Settlement. In 1791, Czar Catherine II designated this region for Jews, and they were not allowed to live elsewhere in Russia. The geographic area covered parts of the modern nations of Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, and Moldova.

Irving Howe’s book, *World of Our Fathers, the Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made*,⁷ describes Jewish life in the Pale and the forces that led to immigration to the US. He explained that Jews of the Pale were, “Bound together by firm spiritual ties, by a common language...Their common religion was Judaism and their holy language, Hebrew.” They also spoke Yiddish, “based originally on a mixture of Middle High German dialects ...” (Howe 12).

The majority of Jews in the Pale lived in shtetls. Howe writes, “The shtetl was a town, usually a small one; it sometimes had cobbled streets; it occasionally had imposing structures; and it rarely was picturesque ... Often the relations between the social strata of the shtetl came to little more than the difference between the poor and the hopelessly poor...nestled in the crevices of a backward agricultural economy where Jews, often prohibited from ownership of land, had to live by trading, artisanship, and their wits” (Howe 10).

The Friedmans lived under the antisemitic reign of the Russian Czars. Howe writes, “Over six hundred anti-Jewish decrees were

⁷ Howe, Irving, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made*. New York University Press, 1976.

enacted, ranging from expulsions from villages in which Jews had traditionally resided to a heavy censorship of Yiddish and Hebrew books, from meddling with curriculum of Jewish schools to a conscription that tore Jewish children away from parents, often at ages between twelve and eighteen, for periods of up to twenty-five years” (Howe 6).

This was the Pale of your ancestors, a poor, Jewish world within, a hostile world from without. Howe explains why so many Jews chose to immigrate to the United States, “...what now uniquely characterized the east European Jews was the explosive mixture of mounting wretchedness and increasing hope, physical suffering and spiritual exaltation. And what was new in their experience was what for the first time they could suppose there was someplace to go, a new world perceived as radically different from the one in which they lived. The spiraling energy, strength, hope, dream of the European Jews enabled many of their sons and daughters to make their escape to America ...“ (Howe 24).

Max Friedman left the Pale and arrived in the US fully a decade before the huge wave of Russian Jews set sail for America after 1881. In 1870, Max sailed from Hamburg, Germany. He arrived before New York’s famous immigration station Ellis Island opened in 1892. Max stepped off the boat into America’s first immigration center at Castle Garden, on the tip of Manhattan.

According to family lore, Max jettisoned his family surname in New York. Rick’s dad, Milt Silverman, says that our original Russian family was Sacherwalski. In his short biographical sketch he wrote, “Max was reportedly told by an immigration official he would not get far unless he had a simpler “American” name – Max looked out the window, spotted an advertisement under the name Friedman, and selected Friedman as his own

name.”

Many immigrants shed their old-world names, adopting new names or new versions and spellings of old names when they entered the US. Our Uncle Milt, a professional journalist and author, no doubt believed the information accurate. I haven't been able to confirm the name Sacherwalski, or variations of the name, on ancestry.com or JewishGen databases. Max's family, including his parents, Louis and Cyril, immigrated to the US under the name Friedman. In addition, when Max gave his 40th marriage anniversary speech in 1913, he made no mention of the name Sacherwalski, but declared, “My name is “Friedman.” “Friedman” in German means “freed man.” Whether Marx was a Sacherwalski first or always a Friedman, his first steps as an American were taken in Troy, New York.

THE FRIEDMANS FROM THE RUSSIAN PALE



The Friedmans lived in Sulwalki in the Russian Pale of Settlement.

The Furniture Friedmans of Troy, NY

Three years after Max arrived in New York, he married Julia Schlomsky (1855-1924). Their wedding was on October 3, 1873 in Manhattan. Julia was only 18 at their ceremony, Max was 23.

Julia's parents were Jacob Schlomsky and Hannah Lichtenstein, who hailed from Kalwaiia in the Russian Pale. Kalwaiia is in southwestern Lithuania, just 24 miles from the town of Suwalki. It appears that Max had found a local girl from the old country, when he made his match in New York.

Max Friedman and his new bride started their married life in Troy, New York. The Troy Street Directories of 1875 list Marx Friedman living on 162 Fifth Street and working as a peddler. Next door is his younger brother, Joseph Friedman. The following year Max moved to 128 River Street. In 1877, he changed jobs, working in a variety store. The couple had their first child, Israel (1874-1968) in 1874. Their second boy, Samuel (1876-1939), was born in 1876.

Max moved to California in 1877. Milt Silverman wrote that Max felt his business prospects would be better on the West

Coast. "To seek his fortune, Max went along to San Francisco, crossing the Isthmus of Panama. He later sent for Julia and the two children, who came to San Francisco where their other children were born and raised."

The rest of Max's family stayed behind in Troy. His brothers, Harris and Joseph, each established their own furniture stores in Troy, New York. In 1887, *H & D Friedman* company was advertised in the Troy street directory as selling "Furniture, Carpets, and Oil, & Cloths." It was located on 150 River Street. The H in the store name was Max's brother Harris (Hirsh), and the D was Delia Friedman, Joseph's wife. By 1895 Joseph/Delia and Harris each had their own places of commerce. There was *D. Friedman Furniture* on 158 River Street, advertising wholesale and retail furniture. Meanwhile, *H. Friedman Furniture*, now on 166 River Street, continued to feature Furniture, Carpets, Oil, and cloths, but also added in smaller print: "window shades, stoves, refrigerators, baby carriages etc."

Max's parents arrived in Troy two years after he left for California. Louis and Cyril Friedman left Hamburg on the ship *Cimbria*, arriving in New York City on July 10, 1879. The couple lived their American lives in Troy, along with several of their children.

Max's mom Cyril died on March 6, 1883, only four years after her arrival. Louis remarried a woman named Deborah. Max's father, Louis, lived until 1897. He passed away on Christmas, December 25, 1897 at the age of 78.



Marx Friedman

Marx "Max" Friedman emigrated to the US in 1870. He first lived in Troy, New York before moving to San Francisco.

Max Friedman - “On our feet once again...”

In San Francisco, Max and Julia, had their third child, Henry Albert Friedman, our grandfather. He was born on November 28, 1878. Five more children were born in California: Celia (1883-1949), Abraham (1886-1973), Lilian (1888-1956), Etta (1890-1956), and Dorothy (1892-1977), making eight children in the Friedman household.

Our Friedmans of San Francisco faced financial challenges in San Francisco in the 1880's and 1890's. Max's M. Friedman Co. became a successful company in the early 20th century. According to his short biography in the book *Western Jewry*, Max Friedman was a prominent figure in San Francisco's Jewish community. He owned a lucrative furniture store. Like his father, Max was an observant Jew. He belonged to the Ohabai Shalome Congregation, a part of the Conservative branch of Judaism. The Friedman's synagogue was on Bush Street in the Western Addition. In addition, Max was president of the Ophir Lodge, a pioneer Jewish organization on the West Coast, and he also participated in the Federation of Jewish Charities.

We have Max Friedman's own account of these decades from a speech he gave in 1914. He said, "I am very glad to be with you this evening on this occasion, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of our marriage. It is just 40 years today since Mama and myself got married. We were married in the year 1873, according to the Jewish calendar the 14th day of Tishary. The marriage took place in the evening at this time. I will tell you, my dear Children, that 40 years is a long stretch of time and lots of things happen during a period of 40 years. Mama and I had our ups and downs. I will now give you a brief synopsis of our married life up to today."

"I arrived here in San Francisco in the year 1877, on the 15th day of September. Mama arrived three months later. She did not travel in a Pullman, as we could not afford it at that time. She came by immigrant train. If I remember rightly, it took ten days to get out here."

"We took up our first residence on Mary Street, which is a small street near Fifth and Mission Streets. We had three rooms there and paid a rental of \$15.00 a month. Our family at that time consisted of two children, Israel and Sammy, and they were mere babies. At the time we had no carpet as we could not afford to buy it. Mama did her own cooking, nursed the children, and scrubbed the floor. In other words, she was her own chamber maid, nurse, cook, besides doing all the other work, and she was very happy to do it until I could afford to hire one servant and that made things a little easier for her. I went out peddling, selling goods. I sold and delivered all the goods on foot or by street car, as we had no automobile. The next year I bought a horse and buggy and delivered the goods to my customers by buggy. I kept this until the year 1884."

"Then I started a store on what is now known as Grant Avenue,

at that time it was called Dupont Street, with a Mr. Brown. I stayed in business with him just three months, until he got good and drunk and wanted to kill me, so I had to dissolve the partnership with him and sold out to him. Then I contracted a partnership with a Mr. Stein. He did not get drunk and did not want to kill me, but he was a very poor business man, and I saw I would lose every dollar I had if I stayed in business with him. I sold out and left him to go into business for myself. My capital at that time was very small. It was not quite \$3,000.00, and represented the savings of about eight or nine years."

"My next business venture was to start a store for myself on Geary Street. I was there about six months and lost one-half of my capital, and gave up the business. After I had all this hard luck and made up my mind not to go into business anymore, but to keep peddling for a living and live a private life. But Mama inspired me and encouraged me to start again. She told me that she would help me and that I should not get discouraged or be afraid and that together we would build up a good business. Having a great deal of faith in Mama's advice I followed it and started business again in the year 1885 on Stockton Street near Post."

"Our store was 13 feet in front by 70 feet deep. We lived in the back of the store and had a frontage of 13 x 20 for store space. I attended to the outside business and Mama was inside attending to the family, also selling goods: that is, she was cook, chamber maid, nurse, sales lady, store keeper and manager of the business. She performed all these duties at once. Well, we were very prosperous for a few years, and then my brother-in-law also came out from New York and helped me a good deal and things went along nicely for us until the year 1896, when we moved to the building where we are now. "

“Then we had lots of misfortunes — they followed us one after the other. First we had the flood, through which we lost \$75,000.00, then followed the strike, earthquake, and panic: and still after all these misfortunes, thank Heaven, today we are now on our feet once again with a big business. We employ 120 people, pay our bills to the minute, and pay all our men good salaries. We have a good name in the city and the State, and also in the East where we buy our goods our credit is good.”



The M. Friedman Co. on Union Square became the largest furniture store on the West Coast.

Julia Friedman - "Matches are made in Heaven..."

In his anniversary speech, Max Friedman credited his wife, Julia, with the family's success. He paid tribute to Julia's sacrifice during hard times and her dedication to her children. Max extolled Julia's fine qualities as wife and mother, "Now, what is the cause of all this good luck? First we have to thank the Almighty God for it, and second you have to be thankful to your mother for everything. Your mother was always a good wife, she was good in adversity and in prosperity. In adversity she helped to do all the work and did not find fault as some women would. I would like to relate a little incident that occurred during our days of adversity."

"We had been here about two years and I used to do a good deal of trading with the J.J. O'Brien & Company, and just before Christmas I had a little conversation with Mr. O'Brien the proprietor. I told him jokingly that as I had been a very good customer of his and bought lots of goods during the past year I ought to get a Christmas present. I was not at all serious and said it only as a joke. He answered me, "Yes, you must have

one." I told him, "No, I did not mean it. It was only said as a joke." He said, "Well your joke must come true" and he took me over to the silk counter and told the clerk to cut off 20 yards of silk. The wholesale price of this silk was \$2.50 a yard. He told me to, "Take it home and present it to Mrs. Friedman with his compliments." Of course, under the circumstances I could not very well refuse, so accepted it, thanked him, and brought it home to Mama. She kept it for three or four days and then told me to sell it and take the money and use it in the business, as we could not afford silk dresses just yet. I tried to persuade her to keep it, but she would not. She said, "We have a family and we need the money for the children." As I was sure she would not accept it I sold the silk, and of course, and used and used the money in the business, which I needed very badly at the time. Now, I leave it to you, my dear Children, if that was not a noble act? How many poor women, such as she was at the time, would have refused a silk dress?"

"In prosperity, when she had time for herself and I had hired a servant to do her work, she put her mind, body, and soul into attending to her children. She did not go out playing cards in the afternoons, as is the style now in San Francisco, and neglect her family, but she stayed at home and put all her time into raising her children, and that is why, thank God, they are well and healthy. She brought them up good. Intellectually, she watched their schooling; physically, she watched the food, diet, clothes, etc.; and morally, she trained them all the time to be good and moral. So today, thank Heaven, we have a nice family of eight children to be proud of. For the above reason they are good men and good citizens — raised good morally, physically, and intellectually by their mother, so I think that your mother deserves a great deal of credit for raising such a large and good

family.”

“There is a saying that “Matches are made in Heaven.” I will prove that our match was made in Heaven. Mama’s name before she was married was “Shlomsky.” Now the word “Shlomsky” originates from the Hebrew world “Shalom” and “Shalom,” as I said before, means Peace.”

“My name is “Friedman.” “Friedman” in German means “freed man,” so my name is Peace in German and Mama’s name is peace in Hebrew, which shows that the Almighty God was right in His match-making as our names harmonize. Both mean peace in different languages which indicates that the Almighty new what He was doing when He made our match.”

“We find in the Bible, in the Book of Genesis 18, “And the Lord said, “it is not good for Man to be alone. I will make him a help suitable for him,” which shows that the Bible is a good book. It states the Truth. I know by my own experience that my wife was really a help, so I can confirm the Bible’s statement in making help suitable to me.”

“..... Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us in life and hast preserved us and enabled us to reach this day of our celebration.”

“O Almighty God, we pray to Thee to give us our health, strength, and long life to live long enough to celebrate our golden wedding and the weddings of our children and grandchildren.”

“May God preserve and bless them all.”

Max and Julia celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1923, a decade after Max’s 40th anniversary speech. Julia Friedman passed away a year later in 1924. Max lived another decade until 1934.

OUR OLD-WORLD HERITAGE



Henry Friedman (1878-1948)

Helen and Henry

Helen Eisner was born in 1889 in San Francisco. She was raised by her mom, Lena Eisner, to become what Milt Silverman described as, “a lady in the grande dame tradition.” She received a “finishing school education in the US and Europe.” Helen continued her, “mother’s support of the arts.” Lena took her daughter Helen regularly to Europe and on many of her world-wide travels. According to her passport, Helen was 5 foot 1 inches tall, with blue eyes, blonde hair, and a fair complexion. A 1910 *San Francisco Call* newspaper article featured Lena Eisner’s considerable cooking and hosting skills. In the accompanying photo, Helen stood at her mom’s side.

Henry Albert Friedman was born on November 28, 1878. Growing up, the Friedmans lived at 1736 Golden Gate Avenue. As an adult, Henry was 5 feet 3 inches tall, of medium build, with brown hair and dark brown eyes. He majored in economics and sociology at Stanford University, graduating in 1901. After graduation, Henry joined his father, working at the M. Friedman & Co. As a young man, Henry lived on 1816 Broadway Avenue. Like Helen, Henry traveled as a young man, too. A 1908 photograph

shows Henry riding a camel, behind him the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx of Egypt.

Although both Helen Eisner and Henry Friedman lived in San Francisco, Milt Silverman tells us they “first met in Paris.” This romantic start to their relationship resulted in marriage on November 10, 1910. Henry was 32 and his bride, Mrs. Helen Friedman, was 21. The couple honeymooned in Yosemite.

In 1912, the couple had their first child, a daughter Margaret. Milton was born on September 21, 1914. Henry and Helen had two more daughters, Virginia and Beatrice. The Friedmans lived on 584 Funston Avenue until they moved to 2750 Divisadero Street.

Henry worked first as a clerk and then served as manager of his father’s furniture company, located at 259-273 Post St. on Union Square. The M. Friedman Co. became the largest furniture dealership on the West Coast until it closed in 1929, just before the stock market crash and the Great Depression. In the 1920 San Francisco street directory for the M. Friedman Company, Max Friedman is listed as President of the company, Israel Friedman as Vice-President, and Henry Albert Friedman Secretary, Treasurer, and General Manager.

HELEN AND HENRY



Helen and Henry Friedman married in 1910 and honeymooned in Yosemite.

The Friedmans - The Next Generation

The four Friedman children grew up on San Francisco. The oldest sibling, Margaret, went to Girls High School. Milton, Virginia, and Beatrice all attended Galileo High School. Margaret, Milton and Virginia were students at nearby Stanford University, while Beatrice traveled south to Pomona College.

Margaret majored in journalism at Stanford and went on to become an advertising copywriter. She married another Stanford graduate, Milton Silverman (1910-1997), in the 1930's. Milt Silverman described himself in his family tree as a "pharmacologist, newspaper and magazine reporter, US Government official, university faculty, and book author." The couple had two children: Lynn (1939) and Rick (1944). The Silvermans divorced in 1975.

Milton majored in economics at Stanford, where he competed as a springboard diver. He served in the Army-Air Force in the Pacific during World War II. After the war, Milton changed his surname from Friedman to Forrest. In 1947 he married Frances Newman (1925-1995), another San Franciscan who attended

Stanford. The couple had three children, Carol (1951-1956), David (1954) and Lisa (1957). Milton and Frances divorced in 1960.

Virginia graduated from Stanford, becoming an industrial artist and designer. She married Richard Nimmons (1914-1996), who was born in Lincoln, Kansas. According to Milt Silverman, Richard's jobs included: public relations, writer, fund raiser, and university official. The couple had four children including: Nancy (1943), John (1944), Susan (1948), and David (1955).

Beatrice married Stanley Brunsten (1915-1989), who was born in Atlantic City. Stanley attended UC Berkeley. He worked as an engineer and a designer and builder of custom furniture. Beatrice was a partner with her husband in their furniture business. The couple had four children, including: Barbara (1945), Patricia (1947), William (1947), and Donald (1954).



*The Friedman Family on La Jolla Beach - circa 1920's. Left to right:
Henry, Milton, Virginia, Margaret, Beatrice, and Helen.*

Nanny Helen

Henry Albert Friedman died June 3, 1948. He was 69 years old. Helen remarried Harry Oser three years later in 1951. The couple lived in a beautiful Atherton home on the Peninsula.

My cousin, Bill Brunsten, remembered his visits with our grandmother. He said that she always took the grandkids for a treat at a nice bakery. He wrote, “Nanny was always warm and smiling toward us when we visited, but she wasn’t physically affectionate. Not because she didn’t love us and our Mom, but I think she was just had a certain reserve... She was always dressed finely, always wore nice dresses, etc. She didn’t wear casual clothes. ”

Bill described our Nanny Helen’s home, “... everything at her house looked beautiful. We visited Nanny in summertime when it was hot and I remember eating all meals on her back patio. Her outdoor table setting always looked beautiful — the rolled butter balls fit right in...Nanny had really good taste including decorative objects in her home, some of which she passed down to my Mom. In particular I remember beautiful, Oriental pieces.”

Bill recalled that, “Nanny had a huge collection of National Geographic magazines going back many, many years. I don’t know if she or Henry or both collected them but I assume the collection reflected their interest in foreign lands.”

My cousin Bill Brunsten also wrote about Harry Oser, “I also remember that at the Atherton house, Nanny and her second husband Harry had a green house which seemed exotic and Harry had a work shop where Harry made jigsaw puzzles. He sent us puzzles which when put together spelled out the names of my Mom and each of us kids.”

Our grandmother, Helen Eisner/Friedman/Oser, died on September 19,1963. She was 73 years old.



Bride, Beatrice Brunsten, with mother Helen and sister Margaret.

Our Heritage

Gone are the names Reinstein and Eisner from our current family tree. If our original Eastern European name really was Sacherwalski, it's lost, too.

Max Friedman wasn't the only name-changer in the family. My Dad, born Milton Friedman, chose the name Forrest after he returned from the war. He told me he changed his name as a young man to make his own way in business, without any help from his Dad's good name and reputation. Others have pointed out that after the terrible events of the Holocaust, Milt Forrest traded his identifiably Jewish last name for one that wasn't. Whatever his motivations, there are no more Friedmans on our branches, either.

While our original family names have changed, our old-world heritage has not. Our immigrant ancestors left Eastern Europe, seeking a better life in America. Despite difficulties, they succeeded through their hard work. The Reinsteins and the Eisners sought their first fortunes during the Gold Rush. In San Francisco, Max Friedman peddled goods on foot, buggy, and street car before establishing the prosperous M. Friedman

Co. Their efforts in the nineteenth century provided a material security and affluence for their children and grandchildren in the twentieth century.

Our ancestors embodied a passion for education. Jacob Reinstein was in the first class of UC Berkeley graduates, and went on to lead the expansion of the university as a Regent. His sister, Lena, became a teacher. Milton Eisner studied and practiced law. Max Friedman sent his son Henry to Stanford. In turn, Henry and Helen Friedman sent all four children to college, not just their son, but their daughters, too. Not surprisingly, among their descendants, we find lawyers, teachers and social workers, generations of Friedmans who share their love of learning and education..

The Reinsteins, Eisners, and Friedmans are long time Californians, with a deep reverence for nature and the environment. Jacob Reinstein was a founding member of the Sierra Club in 1892, with a peak named after him in Kings Canyon National Park. Newlyweds, Henry and Helen Friedman, honeymooned in Yosemite. Old photos show they brought their children up in the outdoors, enjoying the beaches, forests, and mountains of our beautiful state. Their outdoor legacy lives on in their descendants, who not only hike, camp, ski, and backpack, but are devoted to protecting the environment, as well.

Lena Eisner was a patron of the arts, literature and dance. Her grandchildren and great-grandchildren continue to promote the arts, including theater and film. Lena had a zeal for travel. She educated her daughter, Helen, with journeys around the world. She was a global citizen before the term was in vogue. Her descendants uphold this family tradition, as their passports will attest.

Our ancestors embodied a passion for education, a love of

nature, an appreciation of the arts, and a fondness for travel. It is a beautiful heritage the Reinsteins, Eisners, and Friedmans have given us, one which we proudly pass on to our children and grandchildren.



Descendants of Henry and Helen Friedman

Acknowledgements

This short book on our ancestors would not have been possible without my Dad, Milton Forrest, and Rick's father, Milt Silverman. In one box of family memorabilia, I found Max Friedman's 40th anniversary speech typed up by my Dad in the 1980's. Thank goodness he preserved this document.

In a second box, I recovered Milt Silverman's extraordinary family trees of the our Friedmans, Reinsteins, and Eisners, also created in the 1980's. Not only did my uncle trace our origins with names and dates, but he wrote marvelous mini-biographies of many of our ancestors. I've quoted him extensively.

I received important help from cousins, both near and far. Roxanne Richardson found the short biographical entry on Marx Friedman posted online in the book, *Western Jewry: An Account of the Achievement of Jews and Judaism in California*, by Martin A. Meyer. Roxanne did something I hadn't: she googled Marx Friedman's name. Who would have thought?

My cousins closer to home filled in a number of gaps. Don Brunsten provided me lots of excellent information, particularly about our Reinstein roots. Bill Brunsten shared stories of our grandmother, Helen Eisner, who I was too young to remember well. Pat Trower sent me a wonderful book she made of Friedman photos, several of which I've included in these pages. John Nimmons explained the travels of his Nimmons clan, which happily led him back to my very own Mill Valley. And Rick

Silverman started the whole finding Friedmans ball rolling at the meal we shared long ago, the one where we both had to admit how much of our heritage we had somehow misplaced.

My dear friend Tim Wharton has tried to save me from embarrassment by editing the final draft. Nevertheless, when you find errors, and you will, they are my own. I hope you enjoy reading *Our Old-World Heritage - The Journeys of Our Reinsteins, Eisners, and Friedmans*.



Henry Friedman riding the camel on the left. Great Sphinx and Pyramid of Giza in Egypt. March 17, 1908



About the Author

When he is not writing about family history, Dave Forrest enjoys visiting his grandkids on three continents. He spends his favorite days walking in the trees with his loved ones.

Also by Dave Forrest



Our Ancestors

You can read more essays and books about your family history on the *Our Ancestors* website.

<http://daveforrest.net/ancestors/>

