

A

Gurka	Tomo
Hechko	Tomko

Family History

by

Barbara Gurka Clark

with

Conrad Terrill

Version 1.00 (July 2009) of
A Gurka/Tomo/Hechko/Tomko Family History
by Barbara Gurka Clark, with Conrad Terrill
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Dedication

To Richard—my husband and my very best friend, for as long as I've known him.

All my love, forever,

Barbara

Preface

Did you notice anything unusual about the names on the cover?

→

Gurka	Tomo
Hechko	Tomko

Say the names over and over, fast. (And, by the way, Hechko is pronounced “Hetch-ko.”) Gurka—Tomo—Hechko—Tomko!

Gurka—Tomo—Hechko—Tomko! There’s music there, don’t you think? Tubby the Tuba’s melody, maybe? Names like these were fairly common where my ancestors came from; but still, there were many names there which sounded much different. So it really is unusual to have four grandparents with names which go together so well.

My grandparents all came over to America fairly recently. Joseph Hechko came here in 1899. He was the first of the four. And Susanna Tomo Gurka, the last of the four, came in 1913. My grandmother and grandfather Gurka went back to Czechoslovakia for a decade or so, in the 1920’s and 1930’s (and grandfather Gurka died there), but’s let’s not count that. So (not counting that) my folks have been here in the U.S. for about a hundred years now, more or less.

Conrad and I have learned a lot about my family history during the past year. We’ve met a lot of relatives—that’s the part I enjoyed most. It’s been a lot of fun. And it’s been very interesting, too. I never knew very much about my grandparents, except my mother’s mother, and even there I knew almost nothing of her early life. My other three grandparents died before I was born. So this project has given me a chance to meet them all, in a way. And it gives you the chance to meet them too.

This book tells you all that we know about this family history at the present time. Everything we’ve found is in here. Maybe some of you will be able to carry the work further. We weren’t able to trace back the Hechko line very far.

I have written this book for Susan and Rick, my children. And for their children. And for my sister and her children, and for my brothers and their children. If others of you find the book, or parts of it, interesting and useful, well, I’m glad to hear it. I’m happy for you. You must be cousins of mine. Hello, Cousins! May the Gurka melody be with you!

Barbara Gurka Clark, 2006

Love,
Barb

P.S.: Be sure to read Zuzana Barger’s story in Chapter 5. It’s an account of what it was like, growing up in a little village under the High Tatras in the 1920’s and 1930’s.

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Acknowledgements

Thanks first to my sister Judy and to my brothers Jim and Bob for their many contributions. I couldn't have told my family's story without their help. They're the greatest!

Thanks also to my cousins Esther Remsen and Dave Gurka. Esther has almost single-handedly told the story of her father's family. Dave would certainly have helped, but he died in 1999. He helped indirectly, though, in a major way. In 1994 he wrote a six-page manuscript on Gurka family history, to pass on to his daughters after the tragic death of his son. Dave's wife Deanna shared this with Esther in 2002, and Esther has shared it with the rest of us.

Thanks also to my Gurka cousin Evelyn Barger, whom Richard and I got to know a few years ago. Evelyn was the keeper of the many Gurka family stories; she kept up family ties with relatives in Slovakia; and she has shared with many people her treasure of Gurka family pictures. Evelyn was in fact the source of much of the information in Dave Gurka's manuscript—Dave interviewed her in 1991 as part of a lifelong interest in his Gurka roots. We're sorry we didn't get to talk to Evelyn more. She died in 2005. Her son Arthur has helped directly, and he has also served as a very valuable link. Through his aunt, Susan Zbell, he served to connect us to her good friend Mildred Schmidt, who happens to be a first cousin of my mother on the Tomko side. This fortuitous connection bowled us over! We had lost contact with Mildred. Without this connection the Tomko family history would probably have remained almost totally unknown to us. And incidentally, Susan Zbell grew up in Slovakia, and her story (Zuzana Barger's story), told in Chapter 5, is a great contribution to this book.

Mildred Schmidt (and I'm very happy that I got to meet her) is the source of most of the information concerning the Tomko family. She also connected us to her brother, John Fann, and his wife June, and to Carol Maichrye, a Tomko-side relative in the Cleveland area. And Carol in turn connected us to her aunt, Lillian Reinke, who in turn connected us to Don Tomko, a "Five Cousins" relative (you'll have to read the book to learn more). Mildred Schmidt, John Fann and Lillian Reinke are the sole surviving cousins of my mother. John and Lillian have helped enormously to round out the Tomko family history, sharing with us many precious reminiscences. And Mildred, John, Lillian and Carol have shared with us invaluable collections of family pictures.

Thanks very much to all of these people, and to any others I have neglected to mention, for helping me tell the family story. Love to all.

Barbara, 2006

Acknowledgements Postscript

Barbara died of cancer in early September, 2006. She very much enjoyed working on her family history, making heroic efforts on occasion despite suffering considerable pain. She paid for each of these efforts afterwards, but this didn't stop her from rising to the task again and again. Barbara didn't get to meet John Fann and Lillian Reinke, although she dearly would have loved to. She would have loved meeting all her distant relatives.

Arthur Barger served to connect us to a second very helpful person, after Barbara died. A distant relative of Arthur's from Slovakia, Luboslav Jochman, while attending a conference in the U.S. dropped in on Arthur in the fall of 2006. "Lubo" and his father, Daniel, are working on their own family history, and they have helped us with ours by looking up records for us in Slovakia, in exchange for our help on the U.S. side of their research.

A final note: Barbara's sister Judy died unexpectedly in April of 2007 in a car crash. Judy was very interested in her family history, and although she got to see Chapter 7 (she provided very good feedback), I regret that she didn't get to see much of the rest in near-final form. I certainly was looking forward to sharing it with her. I particularly loved Judy's reminiscences concerning her early years, on life in the Joseph and Mildred Gurka family, and her reminiscences concerning her grandmother and Uncle Fred Kummer. Judy's reminiscences add a gentle touch to the book—a very welcome addition.

Conrad, 2007

Introduction

My grandparents all lived in a part of the world that fell within the boundaries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, from the time they were born to the time they emigrated to America. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was formed in 1867 by a union of the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary. Franz Josef, Emperor of the Austrian Empire, was crowned King of Hungary also, thus becoming the Dual Monarch. The Austrian and Hungarian parts of the empire each had separate parliaments, and each had its own prime minister. The Austrian part of the Empire was much more progressive than the Hungarian part—it was becoming industrialized to a substantial degree, while the Hungarian part remained agrarian. Three of my grandparents were from Slovakia, which was called “Upper Hungary” throughout this period. Slovakia had been under the control of the Hungarian Magyars for 900 years, and it remained under their control within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Much of the population of Hungary emigrated to America and elsewhere, when they got the chance.

Susan M. Papp, in her 1981 book *Hungarian Americans and Their Communities of Cleveland*,ⁱⁱ explains the emigration of Hungarians to America, and describes their reception here:

“Between 1870 and 1920 an estimated 1,078,974 Hungarians immigrated to the United States.^[24] (This figure does not include the ethnic minorities who came as citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.) Those who made the arduous journey to the North American continent were lured by the prospects of economic opportunities. The United States, on the other hand, was in need of cheap labor to maintain and expand its industrial potential.

“Around the turn of the century, the flow of immigrants to the United States shifted from western and northern Europe to central and southern Europe. The Industrial Revolution in England, France and Germany literally halted the flow of immigrants to the United States. Rapidly expanding industry, however, created an even greater demand for manpower; Italy, Austria, Hungary and Poland became new centers for the recruitment of workers. By 1910 over nine million immigrants had arrived in the United States from these regions in Europe. This mass migration has been attributed to the combined effects of “push” from the country of origin and “pull” exerted by the United States.

“The “push” was primarily caused by poverty and overpopulation in the countryside. Hungary’s population was augmented by two million in the 1880s. This aggravated the situation of the agricultural laborers, to whom the increased numbers of workers meant lower wages and less work. Moreover, the problem of overpopulation exerted greater demands on the already limited amount of available farmland. A semi-feudal land ownership system determined that one-half of all arable land belonged to landowners with large estates (ranging from a few thousand acres to 50,000 and 150,000 acres) and medium-sized estates (from seventy to 700 acres).^[25] The other half of the agricultural population consisted of small landholders, dwarf-landholding farmers and landless agricultural peasants. Small landholders owned from fifteen to seventy acres and were able to make a living from their own property. The dwarf-landholding farmers owned a house and maybe a few acres, but could barely subsist on their own land. This latter group, along with the landless agricultural workers were the ones who immigrated to America.

“Working and living conditions were inhuman. Landless agricultural workers worked from sunup until sundown for usually less than twenty-five cents a day. Industry was barely developed in Hungary, and the poverty-stricken peasant could not find work in a nearby city or town. The over-abundance of laborers often resulted in maltreatment and abuse from overseers and landlords. Many of the peasant laborers had their fill of the back-breaking work and starvation pay. They gambled everything on steerage to America because they had little to lose and everything to gain.



The location of Austro-Hungary in Europe around 1900.
(Wikipedia: map by user Kpalion, 2004, public domain.)

“Several factors contributed to the “pull” to the United States, such as: recruiting agents and letters and/or money sent by fellow countrymen already in America. Agents recruiting cheap labor for demanding American industry afforded the means by which the peasant could gain passage to America. Usually, because of conditions in the homeland, it didn’t take much convincing on the part of the agent. Some companies such as the New Brunswick, New Jersey-based Johnson & Johnson hired a staff of recruiting agents and contracted shipping lines to bring shiploads of

immigrants from Fiume directly to New Brunswick. Fiume was the main point of embarkation for immigrants from Austria-Hungary destined for the United States. In retrospect, the agents were highly successful, nearly ten percent of Hungary’s population immigrated to America between 1870 and 1920.”¹²

“The majority of Hungarians who immigrated to America at this time came with the intention of returning to Hungary, hopefully with enough money to purchase land.”¹³

“They lived in large overcrowded boardinghouses, where sometimes even the beds would be shared by men working on different shifts. The immigrant women who ran these boardinghouses never had a moment’s rest; the work involved was overwhelming. It was a privilege for an immigrant to have a bed in a boardinghouse run by a Hungarian woman and, above all, to receive Hungarian-style home-cooked meals. The boardinghouse manager cooked the meals, washed all the boarder’s clothes and cleaned the house. For this, each boarder paid around \$3 per week.”¹⁴

“American industry exploited the masses of unskilled immigrant laborers. The newcomers were handicapped by language barriers and unfamiliar with labor conditions. The one dollar a day wage seemed unbelievable when compared to what they were earning in their native land. Because of the seemingly high wages, they were willing to work long, strenuous hours under hazardous conditions to save money. A Hungarian worker in a Pittsburgh steel mill noted: “Wherever the heat is most insupportable, the flames most scorching, the smoke and soot most choking, there we are certain to find compatriots bent and wasted with toil.”^[29]¹⁵

“The grueling, unsafe working conditions had to be tolerated, there was little other alternative. The Hungarians were handicapped by language barriers, by a large number of other newcomers eager for employment opportunities, and by the fact that the next job may be just as bad if not worse. Putting their sorrow and yearning into music sometimes helped. The theme of the following folk song may be found in countless other Hungarian-American poems and short stories as well:”¹⁶

“The coal powder absorbs our tears, Our laughter is drowned in smoke, We yearn to return to our little village Where every blade of grass understood Hungarian.”^[31]

“Central and East European immigrants were frequently brought to the United States as strikebreakers. Large industrial firms, unwilling to cede to the strikers’ demands of fewer hours, increased wages and/or safer working conditions, simply brought a shipload of immigrants from Europe to fill the striking workers’ jobs. The agents recruiting such workers were usually instructed to choose immigrants of many different national origins, so that it would be difficult to organize the newcomers because of language barriers. The newcomers were bewildered by the situation, and could not under-

stand the reason for the hatred and violence directed against them by the strikers. For many Hungarians coming to the United States in the early 1900s, this was their first encounter with organized labor.”¹⁷

“Resentment and discrimination were experienced by each new wave of immigrants and Hungarians proved to be no exception. Hungarian immigrants were handicapped from the start—they spoke a strange language and even if they learned English, the easily detectable accent was obvious. They were resented because they took the lowest paying jobs and lived on next to nothing, saving everything to return to their native land.”¹⁸

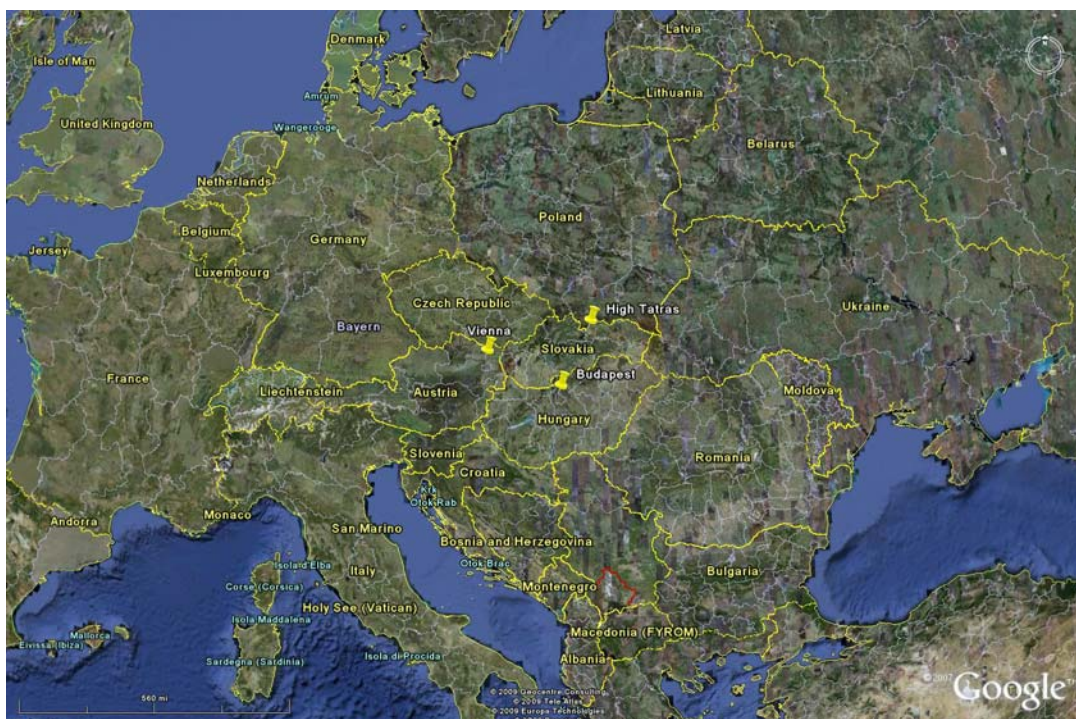


The Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, just before it was divided up. (From *The Imperial House of Hapsburg: Österreich Über Alles*, by Juraj Lisiak, McGill University, 1998, www.hapsburg.com. Lisiak wrote that he took most of the maps in his work from P. R. Magocsi's *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*.)

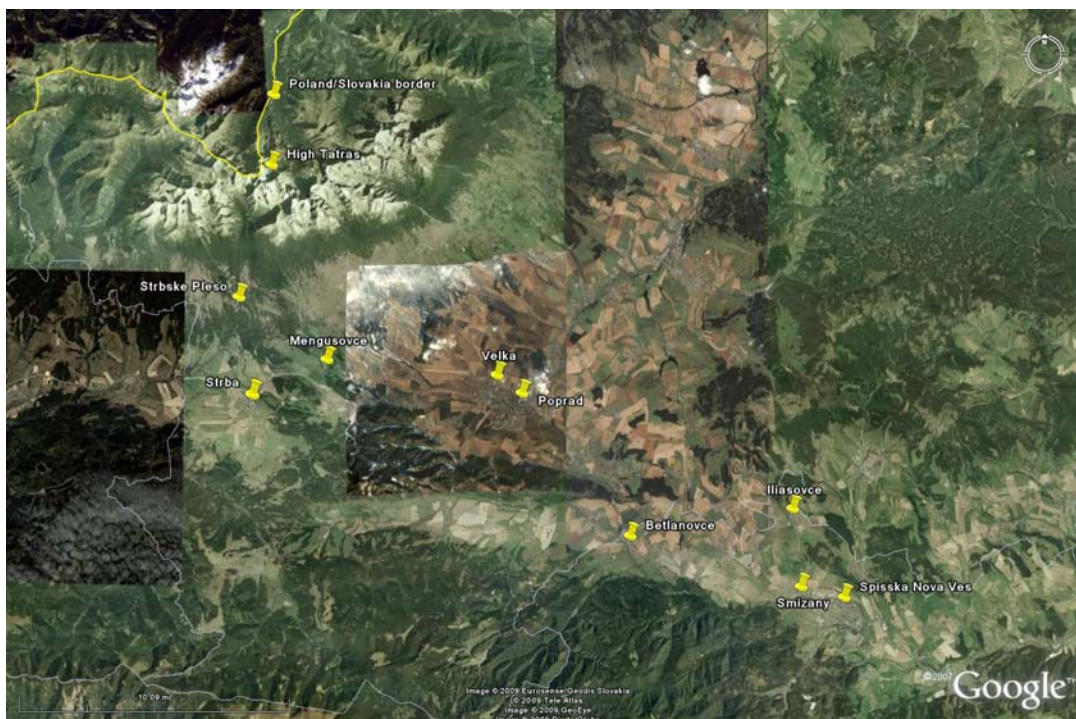
Ms. Papp describes very well, I think, the immigration experience of some of my ancestors, particularly of Jan Tomko, and of Jan Gurka and his family. The later history of Slovakia also is a factor in the stories of my ancestors. After World War I the Austro-Hungarian Empire was divided up into a number of countries. Roughly speaking, Galicia, in the map above, became part of Poland; Bohemia, Moravia and Upper Hungary became the Czechoslovak Republic; Transylvania was lost to Romania, and Austria and Hungary each lost territory to the south as well.

Czechoslovakia turned Socialist in 1945, and remained politically bonded with the Soviet Union until 1989. In 1993 Czechoslovakia was peacefully dissolved, and the separate countries of the Czech Republic and Slovakia were formed.

On the following page you will find two satellite image maps of that part of the world as it is today. We have pinpointed some places of interest. The High Tatra mountains were a daily backdrop for Zuzana Tomko, Zuzana Tomo and Ján Gurka. Zuzana Tomko and Zuzana Tomo were born in Štrba; and Ján Gurka was born in Betlanovce, and raised in Poprad. These places form the European part of the setting for this Gurka/Tomo/Hechko/Tomko family history.



Our Gurka, Tomo and Tomko ancestors came from the country that is now called Slovakia. They were from the northern part of the country, just below the High Tatra Mountains. We believe that Joseph Hechko came from Silesia, which is now part of Poland, near the Czech Republic. (Google Earth hybrid map / satellite image .)



Here's an aerial view showing Štrba, Štrbské Pleso, Poprad, Vel'ká, Betlanovce, Smižany, Iľasovce and Spišská Nová Ves, all places of importance in *A Gurka/Tomo/Hechko/Tomko Family History*. These places all had a magnificent view of the High Tatras. (Google Earth hybrid map / satellite image .)

Chapter 1

The Tomkos, my grandmother's family

Zuzana Tomko was my mother's mother. She was born in June of 1885 in Štrba (pronounced "shtur buh"), a village in a valley below the High Tatra mountains in present-day Slovakia.¹⁰¹ At the time my grandmother was born Slovakia was called "Upper Hungary," and it was part of the Kingdom of Hungary, which in turn was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Most places in Upper Hungary had both Slovakian and Hungarian names. The Hungarian name for Štrba was Csorba. Almost all of the villagers in Štrba were farmers who farmed strips of land in the area surrounding the village. There was a lake in the mountains five miles north of the village called Štrbské pleso (Štrba lake), and this was part of Štrba in my grandmother's time. A settlement started there in 1872 had developed into a tourist resort, well known to the Europeans who liked to hike in the Tatras, who were called "Tatra wanderers". (Today Štrbské pleso is a world famous ski resort.) Many of the tourists liked to board in houses in the villages near the Tatras in the summer, and many Štrba families earned extra income this way.

The American form of my grandmother's name is "Susan," but while we tell the Slovakian part of her story we'll use Slovakian names. Her father, Jan (*pronounced "Yon"*) Tomko, was born in Štrba in March of 1857, the son of Matej (*pronounced "Ma-tay"*) and Maria (nee Kavalier or Krajči) Tomko.¹⁰² Her mother, Zuzana Húska, was born in March of 1861, also in Štrba, the daughter of Michal and Maria (nee Kubisz) Húska.¹⁰³ Jan Tomko and Zuzana Huska were married in Štrba in January of 1881.¹⁰⁴ Daughter Zuzana was their first child, followed by Jan (who was born in December of 1887 and died at age sixteen months), Maria (born in November of 1889), Anna (April of 1892), Zofia (August of 1894) and Pavel (pronounced something like "Powell," born in May of 1901)—all born in Štrba.^{105,106} The family lived in Štrba house number 92, and it appears that they shared it with Jan's brother Pavel and his family.* This house was a log cabin on a street in the village. Some of these old log cabins still exist in Slovakia. The logs were squared, about eight inches on a side.¹⁰⁷

In the mid-1890's the Hungar Carpath Corporation built the Joseph's Bungalow, for tourists, in Štrbské pleso. Around 1900 the Spa House was built there, and in 1906 the grand hotel Štrba opened there.¹⁰⁸ Many Štrba villagers would have found day jobs in Štrbské pleso, and many young men from Štrba found summer work maintaining the hiking trails throughout the Tatras.

It may seem hard for those of us who have grown up in America to believe; but Slovakia, at the time my grandmother's parents were born, was just barely out of the Middle Ages. Feudalism was abolished in Hungary in 1849. Up to then the peasants were bound to the



The Tomko sisters in New York City in 1910, with a friend from Štrba whose name we do not know. From left: Anna, Maria, Sophia, Susanna.

* See House Number 92 in Appendix E for more detail.



Štrba, with the High Tatras in the background, from a 1950's postcard. The Lutheran church is on the left; the Catholic church is in the middle.

land—they were not free to move, and they could not own property. Even after the abolition of feudalism most peasants were obliged to work for landowners for many years, to pay debts and to procure farms. Slovakia had been part of the Hungarian Kingdom for over nine hundred years by this time. Slovaks were oppressed by Hungarians who wanted to “Magyarize” them. The Magyars wanted the Slovaks to speak Hungarian, to become Hungarian, and to forget that they were ever Slovak. They tried to discourage religion and education; but

Slovaks, like most of the non-Magys in the Kingdom of Hungary, paid lip service when required, and tried their best to ignore Magyar demands. They continued to go to church and they continued to celebrate Slovak holidays and customs. They sang and they danced, and they longed for the day when they would be free of Hungarian oppression.

In 1867 the Kingdom of Hungary was united with the Austrian Empire, forming the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with the Austrian Emperor Jozef Franz serving now as the King of Hungary too. Jan Tomko was nine years old when this happened, and Zuzana Huska was five. For Slovaks this union of empires had little real effect. The Magys were still in control of their half of the Empire. Most of the time the Slovaks didn't dwell on their oppression, though. Life was hard, but they'd never experienced anything else—so that was just the way it was. They were peasants, and they worked their farms and enjoyed life as best they could, and there were certainly many joyous occasions. But some of them, now free to leave, were emigrating to America (and elsewhere), and stories were coming back of the possibility of earning much more money, and of the possibility of a better life.

Daughter Anna talked about her girlhood in Štrba. She told that the pastures for their cows and sheep were up in the mountains, and that she or one of her sisters had to lead these animals up there in the morning; and in the evening one of them would have to lead the animals back home. The animals spent the summer nights, and winters, in a barned-in area near the cabin. The Tomkos (like the other families in the village) didn't have many animals, perhaps a cow or two at any one time, a sheep or two, a pig, and some chickens and geese. Anna told that they had a team of horses, too, and she told of a time when her father put her on a big workhorse and sent her off somewhere on an errand. She had no saddle—just a rope and a halter. She was riding the horse near a railroad track when a train came and scared the horse. It reared up and dumped



Pavel (Paul) Tomko, 1926 (the earliest picture we have of him).

her, and ran home without her.^{10, *}

We've heard that Jan Tomko came to America for a period, didn't like it, and returned home.¹⁰⁹ We believe that he was a "Jan Tomko" who, on a 1903 ship's passenger list, declared that he had been in the U.S. before, from 1894 to 1900, in Sharon, Pennsylvania.¹¹⁰ These dates are consistent with the births of his children (Žofia in August of 1894 and Pavel in May of 1901). He arrived at the port of New York for the second time in February of 1903 aboard the

S.S. Kronprinz Wilhelm. He was 42 years old (his actual age should have been 45), and he was accompanied by 17-year-old Pal Tomko, his wife's sister's son, we believe (more about him below). Jan was married, Pal was single, they were both laborers from "Corba, Hungary" (we think "Csorba" was meant), and they were on their way to join "Janos Huska, Beaver 2436 Allegheny, Pa.," who was "friend" to Jan and "stepfather" to Pal. "Allegheny" was probably Allegheny City, which is part of Pittsburgh, and which has a street named Beaver Avenue. It's likely that they came to Allegheny City to work in a steel mill. Janos and Pal, by the way, are Hungarian forms of the Slovakian names Jan and Pavel.

We think we found a record of Jan Tomko's first trip to America. We think he was a "Janos Tomko," age 36 (his actual age should have been 37), who arrived at the port of New York in De-



John and Mary (Tomko) Poliacik, ~1909.



Štrba in September 1994. Photo by John and June Fann.

cember of 1894.¹¹¹ These earlier ships' passenger lists contained less information, so it's not easy to tell one "Janos Tomko" from another. This 1894 "Janos Tomko," along with five other men, all laborers from Hungaria, was headed for Tyrone, Pennsylvania. One of the other men was a "Janos Blasko," and "Blasko" was a surname common in Štrba, so this helps to identify this particular Janos Tomko as my grandmother's father. Tyrone is in mid-state Pennsylvania, on the Pennsylvania Railroad line, where it cuts through the Allegheny Mountains. These six men were likely headed for coal mines, possibly the Clearfield coal field mines, not far from Tyrone. Many companies in America at this time were recruiting laborers in Hungaria, to replace striking American union laborers in the coal mines and steel mills.

* You will find an account of growing up in Slovakia in Chapter 5. That account is by Zuzana Barger, who was born three miles from Štrba in 1924. Her story is in general similar to what we would expect to be the story of the Tomko girls.



The Daniel Fano log cabin, in Kolárovice, where John Fano grew up. The Tomko log cabin in Štrba would have looked much the same. This picture was probably taken in the 1940's or '50's, by a Fano relative.

Zuzana's mother died in Štrba in October of 1903, at age forty-two, when Pavel was two years old.¹¹² She suffered from goiter, a condition usually caused by a diet deficient in iodine, resulting in an enlarged thyroid gland, and she suffered a great deal of pain. She ended her own life by throwing herself down a well.¹⁰⁹ If her husband was the Jan Tomko who arrived in America in February of 1903, then he was probably not in Štrba when she died. He would have headed home as soon as he heard the terrible news, though, to take charge of his children. And Zuzana, at age 18, would have taken charge of the household chores, if she hadn't already done so in her mother's decline. She later had a reputation as a very good cook, so it was

perhaps at this time that she learned the skills. Maria was 13, Anna was 11, and Žofia was 9. These three younger sisters would have been going to school, and assisting Zuzana in their spare time.

In April of 1906 Jan Tomko married again. He married Zuzana (nee Dusik) Otčenás (*pronounced "Ot-chee-nus"*), a widow.¹¹³ Zuzana Dusik was born in February of 1858, the daughter of Martin and Maria (Sykoro) Dusik. According to a family story Zuzana and her sisters did not get along well with their step-mother; so they left and went to America.¹⁰⁹ According to another family story Jan fell seriously ill, and on his deathbed made his daughter Zuzana promise to get her sisters to America.⁷ This Zuzana did indeed do, but if this story is correct then Jan recovered, since he lived

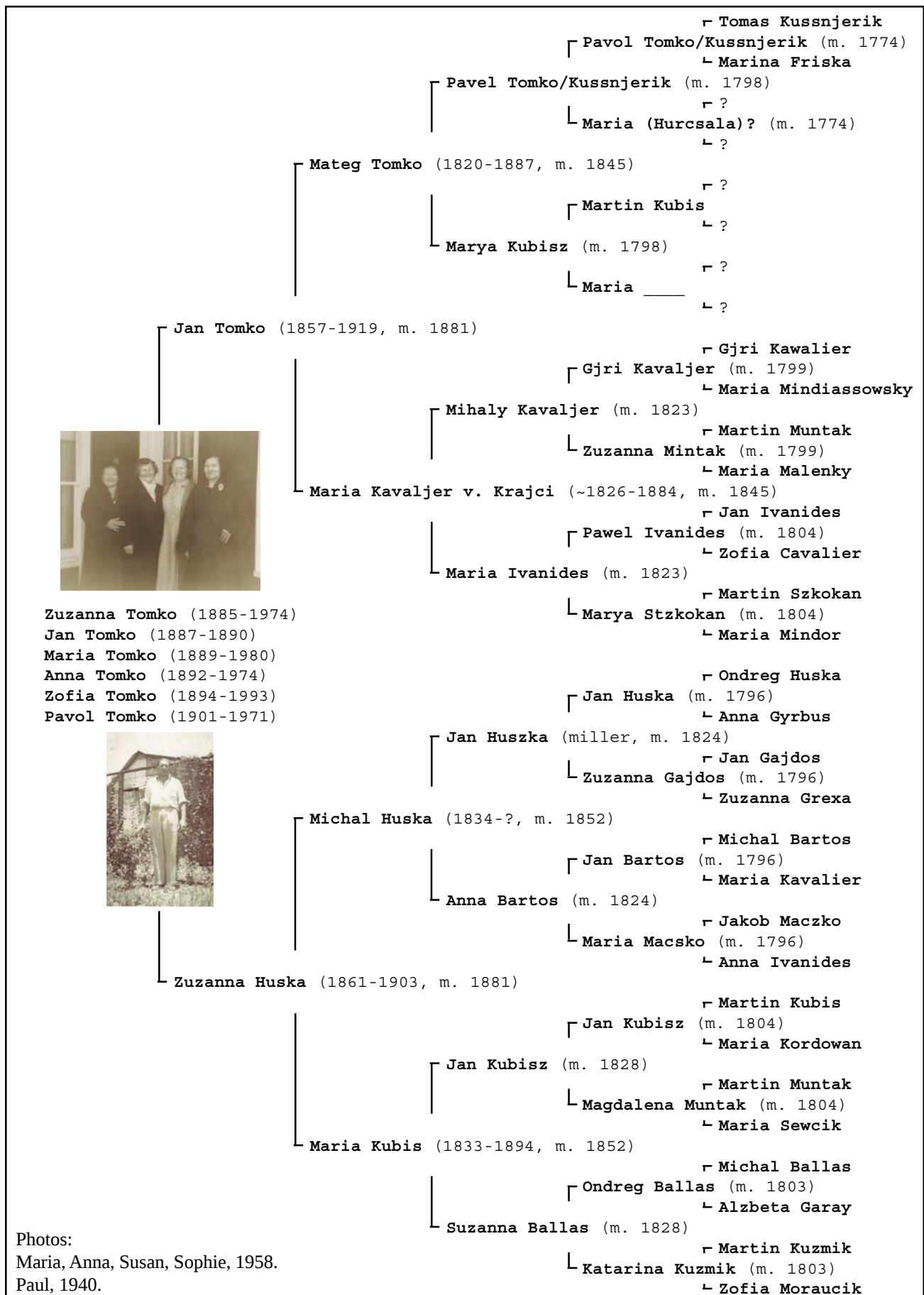
The Tomko Family Tree

That's the Tomko family tree on the opposite page. We are lucky in that almost five complete generations of ancestors of my grandmother and her siblings can be found in the Štrba Catholic and Lutheran parish records. These records extend from the 1740's to the 1890's, so for that period, at least (and probably for a period which starts much earlier), nearly all my Tomko ancestors lived their entire lives in Štrba.

Our Tomko ancestors were farmers, from what we can tell, except for the grandfather of my grandmother's mother, Jan Huska, who was the miller of Štrba in the mid-1800's. He may have been both a miller and a farmer, though.

Tomas Kussnjerik and Marina Friska, and Michal Bartos and Maria Kavalier, who were great-great-great-grandparents of my grandmother Zuzana (Tomko) Hechko, were also great-great-grandparents of my other grandmother, Zuzana (Tomo) Gurka, who too was born and raised in Štrba. So my two grandmothers were third cousins, once removed.

This tree is based mainly on Štrba Lutheran parish records on microfilm in the Slovakian National Archives at Bytča (Štátny archív v Bytči), searched for us by the Institute for Historical Family Research (IHFF Genealogie Gesellschaft mbH, Vienna, Austria; www.ihff.at). The early part of the Tomko paternal branch is from Štrba Catholic parish records searched for us by Štátny archív v Bytči directly.



another dozen years after Zuzana left. It's likely though that Jan wanted his daughters to go to America. He may have been worried by signs of impending turmoil in Slovakia, and he may have wanted to get them out of harm's way. World War I was just ahead. Many other parents in Upper Hungary were moving their families to America and elsewhere, too. Or it might be that Jan just knew that his daughters would be better off in America.

Zuzana was 21 years old when she left for America with three other girls from Štrba—Zuzanna Ocenas (age 23 and, considering her surname, possibly Zuzana Tomko's new step-sister), and Anna (21) and Zuzanna (17) Macko (*pronounced "Mots'-ko"*). They sailed from Bremen, Germany, on February 2nd, 1907 on the steamer Main, and arrived at Ellis Island, New York City, on February 15th.¹¹⁴ Steamship passage to America generally took about this amount of time in those days, with perhaps a short stop or two along the way, in England or France, to pick up more passengers. Steerage passengers were required by U.S. Customs to declare whom they were intending to join in America, and Zuzana declared that she was intending to join brother-in-law Ondrej Hansko, of Washington Avenue, Torrington, Connecticut. The other girls were also going to Torrington, to join brothers. Zuzana actually did not have a brother-in-law (unless he was an Otčenás step-brother-in-law), and since she did not go to Torrington we assume that the destination she gave was given for form's sake only. Zuzana was by this time old enough to depart from the immigration port on her own, unescorted; but if she had been any younger it would have been required that she be met by an escort. We believe she actually went to Port Chester, New York, near the Connecticut state line and on the coast of Long Island Sound, where she found work and began to earn the money to pay the way for her sisters to follow her. It may seem odd that Zuzana's original destination was Torrington, considering that her descendants (including me!) ended up there many years later. However, Torrington was one of a number of places in America with considerable Slovakian communities. This was why she chose Torrington, and it was also why her descendants later chose Torrington. The original Slovakian immigrant probably settled in Torrington in the 1860's or 1870's, and all those who followed went there to be with relatives, friends or fellow Slovaks. The description given on the Customs form tells us that Zuzana was 5' 0" tall, with fair complexion, blond hair and brown eyes.



Sophie Tomko in the early 1910's.



Anna Tomko, ~1910.

Sixteen-year-old "Mery Tomko" (Maria) arrived in New York nine months after Zuzana, in November of 1907.¹¹⁵ Her destination, as given on the Customs form, is difficult to read (it's something like "17 N. Navistr, Pachester, NY," and she probably meant Port Chester, NY), but she was going there to join her sister "Zuzi Tomko," who had paid her ship fare and who also had provided a ticket to her destination.



Sophie Tomko (right) and her friend Sophie Macko, in the early 1910's.

Mery travelled by herself. Her journey was not as trouble-free as she would have wished. She was detained at the immigration station at Ellis Island for five days, after which she was finally released to “Hung. Home” (presumably a home for Hungarians in NYC). Mery was described as 5' 0" tall, with fair complexion, black hair and black eyes. Maria presumably joined Zuzana and set to work helping to earn the money to pay the way for Anna and Žofia.

Anna and Zsophie Tomko arrived together in New York five months later, in April of 1908.¹¹⁶ They traveled with a distant cousin from Štrba, a young mother with two babies.[†] This woman envied them because they were going to the city, whereas she herself was headed to join her husband on a farm, and she was tired of farm life.⁷ Anna and Zsophie declared that they were going to join brother-in-law Jan Misura, at No. 408 E. 70th St., New York City. This Jan Misura had paid their ship fare and had provided them with tickets to their destination. Anna's age was given as 17, and Zsophie's as 16. Anna and Zsophie were detained for a day at Ellis Island and then released to their sister, “Mrs. Susie Misourak,” of 408 E. 70th St. It appears that Zuzana felt that Anna and Zsophie would make it through Ellis Island more easily if they were coming to join a brother-in-law (as she herself had done), rather than a sister. We don't believe that Zuzana ever married a Jan Misura, but we do believe that Jan Misura was someone whom all the Tomko sisters knew from Štrba. (In fact, we believe that this Jan Misura settled in Torrington, CT, some years later, and that his children were well known to Zuzana's and Zsophie's children.)^{7,117} Anna was 5' 1" tall with brown eyes, and Zsophie was 4' 8" tall with gray eyes. Both had fair complexion and fair hair.

So in a little more than a year Zuzana had brought her sisters to America, fulfilling the promise she'd made to her father. Zuzana wanted to bring seven-year-old Pavel over, too, but Pavel wanted to stay in Slovakia with his father and step-mother.⁷ Now that they've all arrived in America we'll start referring to the Tomko sisters by their new American names—Susan, Mary, Anna and Sophia.

The sisters stayed together for a while in the vicinity of New York City. We think we've found them all in the 1910 U.S. Census. Mary was the first to marry. She married John Poliacik around 1909. We think they are John and Mary “Poletchick,” who lived on Henry Street in Greenwich, Connecticut at the time of the Census.¹¹⁹ Mary was 20 years old and John was 26. John was born in August of 1884 in Sučany, in present-day Slovakia,

[†] This woman's name was Zsafia Jakubcsiak, age 21. Her 1½-year-old daughter Zuzanna was born in “Pochester, NY,” and her two-month-old son Pal was born in Štrba. She and her children were headed for Emporia, Virginia, to join her husband Paul.¹¹⁸



Sophie (center) and friends at a resort in the Catskills, in the early 1910's.

about 50 miles west of Štrba.¹²⁰ He, like Mary, had immigrated in 1907, and he was a molder at a foundry. Susan married just two months before the Census, and she and Joseph Hechko and his three children by a previous wife were living at 202 St. Nicholas Street in Manhattan.¹²¹ Susan (“Sussie” in the Census) was 22 years old, and 15-year-old Sophie “Domko” [sic] was living with her and her new family. We think Anna was an 18-year-old “Annie Tomko” who worked as a live-in servant for a Romanian immigrant family with a one-year-old daughter, in an apartment building at 353 118th Street in Manhattan.¹²² There was also a 19-year-old “Annie Tomko” in Cleveland, who worked as a servant for Oscar Eiler, a musician in an opera house, who with his wife Bessie and their one-month-old baby Velma lived in an apartment house at 1182 Addison Road.¹²³ But we think this Annie Tomko in Cleveland was most likely Anna’s cousin. Anna herself would soon move to Cleveland, but we think she did so after the Census in 1910.



Alsbeta (“Elizabeth”) Huska Tomko, right, and daughter Mary, ~1913.

Anna’s cousin in Cleveland was one of “The Five Cousins.” These were the children of Susan’s aunt, Alzbeta Huska Tomko, who was Susan’s mother’s sister. Susan’s father, Jan Tomko, and the father of the five cousins, Pavel Tomko, were third cousins. The five cousins were of about the same range of ages as the four Tomko sisters and their brother Pavel. The cousins and their mother arrived in America in the first decade of the 20th Century, too. Their American names were John Tomko (born in 1884), Paul (1888), Anna (1891), Michael (1893) and Mary (1904 or 1905). There was one more close relative in America—another of Zuzana Huska Tomko’s sisters, Sophie Huska Daniel, who with her husband John lived in Sharpsville, Pennsylvania. Sophie was known to the four sisters and the five cousins as “Auntie Daniel” (“Auntie” was usually pronounced “Antie”), and Alzbeta was “Aunt Beta.”^{*†}

Jan Tomko died in Štrba in April of 1919.¹²⁴ He had lived just long enough to witness the long-hoped-for release of the Hungarian hold on Slovakia. As a result of the Treaty of Trianon, after the end of World War I, Slovakia became part of a new country, called Czechoslovakia, with autonomous rule.

* A history of the families of Alsbeta Huska Tomko and Sophia Huska Daniel may be found in Appendix E.

† The Tomko sisters had many other more distant relatives in America. The sisters were related to many people in Štrba, and it can be shown that at least 300 people (and probably considerably more) from Štrba came to America just during the period from 1898 to 1914.¹²⁵

Chapter 2

Joseph Hechko and Susie Tomko, my mother's parents

Joseph Hechko (pronounced "Hetch-ko"), my mother's father, was born in October of 1873 in Silesia, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire then, and most likely part of Poland now (although a very small part of Silesia is now in Austria).²⁰¹⁻²⁰³ We have no pictures of him, but we know that he was of medium height and medium build, with brown eyes and brown hair.²⁰¹ His native language was Polish, according to the 1910 U.S. Census.²⁰⁴ His father's name was John Hechko, and his mother's was Eva Jas.^{205,203} Joseph emigrated to America at age 25, arriving in New York on June 13th, 1899.²⁰⁹ He married his first wife, Marie Petruvka (who was not my mother's mother), in April of 1903. Marie was born in "Hungary" in November of 1883 to Paul and Catherine (Pulag) Petrufka, both of whom too were born in "Hungary."²⁰⁶ She came to America in December of 1900 from Rohov, in present-day Slovakia.²⁰⁷ Joseph and Marie Hechko's first child, Joseph Jr., was born in October of 1903, followed by Rudolph in March of 1905 and Helen in 1907 or 1908.^{208,202,204} Joseph Sr. became a naturalized U.S. citizen in July of 1904.²⁰⁹ At that time he was an electrician living in Manhattan, at 70 East 119th Street. Marie Hechko died at 202 St. Nicholas Avenue in Manhattan in December of 1909, in childbirth. She was buried in St. Michael's Cemetery.²⁰⁶



Susan Hechko, with children Martha and Mildred, ~1921.



Martha (left) and Mildred Hechko, ~1921.

In New York City city directories Joseph Hechko first appeared in 1903, as an electrician with a business at 1411 Fifth Avenue.²¹⁰ In 1904-1905 there was a "T. Hechko" listed, an electrician with a home address of 70 East 119th Street (the same as that on Joseph's 1904 naturalization certificate), so this is either a misprint or else Joseph had a relative living with him. By 1908-1909 he had moved to 202 St. Nicholas Avenue, which is where he was living in April of 1910, at the time when the U.S. Census enumerator came around. By this time he had remarried. He had married "Susie" Tomko, my mother's mother, in February of that year.²⁰⁵ Susie Tomko's story up to this point is given in the previous chapter. She was born in Štrba, up near the High Tatras in northern "Upper Hungary" (present-day Slovakia), and she immigrated from there in February of 1907. We don't know how Susie Tomko and Joseph Hechko met. Susie's address on their marriage certificate was given as East Portchester, Connecticut (which is across the state line from Port Chester, New York). Joseph's was still 202 St. Nicholas Avenue. The marriage ceremony, performed by an alderman, took place at City Hall in Manhattan. The witness to the marriage was Chas. E. Hechko. Charles Hechko does not seem to be listed in the 1910 U.S. Census, but he can be found on the passenger list of a ship that arrived in New York City in

December of 1905. He was 20 years old then (so he was born around 1885), single, an engineer, and a Polish-speaking citizen of Austria. His last residence was “Lisshnitz;” he had been to the U.S. before (apparently New York, from 1903 to earlier in 1905); and he had come again in late 1905 to join his brother Josef Hechko, of 1411 Fifth Avenue, NYC.²¹¹

At the time of the 1910 Census the family consisted of Joseph, age 36, “Suse,” 23, Joseph Jr., 6, Rudolph, 5, and Helen, 2. And Suse’s sister Sophie “Domko” [sic], age 15, was living with them. Joseph was a locksmith, in a shop, working on his own account. There were 24 people in five households renting in the tenement house at 202 St. Nicholas Avenue.²⁰⁴ Sophie most likely had been rooming with her sister Susie in East Portchester before the marriage.

There was a Frank Hechko listed in the 1910 Census, living in New York City, who was about the right age to be a younger brother of Joseph. (We mention this fact in case it may become important to a future family historian.) Frank and Annie Hechko, ages 27 and 22, were living at 143 or 145 Greenwich Street. They had no children (two had died) and they and their parents were all from Austria. Frank immigrated in 1903 and Annie in 1905.²¹² There were few other Hechkos living in the United States at that time.



Maria Tomko Poliacik and son John, ~1912.

Joseph and Susie Hechko’s first child, Mildred Susan (my mother), was born in November of 1910. Their second child, Martha, was born in March of 1918. Martha developed whooping cough when she was very young. This was a very serious illness at that time, and although Martha recovered, she had suffered brain damage from lack of oxygen. She remained emotionally child-like for the rest of her life. Martha’s arrested development caused Susie great anguish, and it also caused serious strife in the Hechko household.^{4,1}



John and Sophie Fano, in 1917.

As we mentioned in Chapter 1, Susanna’s (Susie Hechko’s) sister Mary Tomko married John Poliacik around 1909. From his 1918 World War I draft registration card we learn that John was of medium height, medium build, with grey eyes and light hair.²¹³ In 1910 he was a molder in a foundry, probably near where they lived, at 229 Henry Street in Greenwich, Connecticut.²¹⁴ Their first child, John Jr., was born in June of 1910 in Connecticut, probably at that address. Mary Jr. was born around 1913 in Pennsylvania (we know that they lived in Scranton at one time)⁷, and Steve, Joseph and Emily were born around 1915, 1917, and 1919, respectively, in New Jersey, probably all in Somerville (about 26 miles east-south-east of Newark), where the family was living by September of 1918.

Their address was 154 Fairview Avenue in 1918 and 1920, and 437 East Main Street in 1930. And in all three of these years John Sr. was a molder at a foundry. According to the 1918 record the foundry was the Somerville Stove Manufacturing Company, and this is probably where John worked for the full stretch from 1915 to 1930.^{213,215,216} John and Mary Poliacik remained in Somerville for the rest of their lives.

Anna Tomko moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where “the five cousins” lived, probably soon after the 1910 U.S. Census. There she soon married Steven Komezda, who was born in June of 1882 in “Slovakland,” and who immigrated in October of 1906. Steve’s World War I Draft Registration Card describes his height and build as medium, and his eyes and hair color as dark. Their first child, Benjamin, was born in June of 1912, followed by Anna in March of 1914 and Helen in November of 1917, all born in Ohio. In 1918 Steve was a tinsmith at the Theodor Kundtz Company in Cleveland.[†] In 1920 they were living at 3285 West 127th Street in West Park (a suburb of Cleveland) in a home that they owned.^{217,218}



Anna and Steve Komezda, with Benjamin, Helen (in Anna’s lap) and Anna Jr., ~1919.



The Tomko sisters and their families, circa 1922. Front row: Joseph Poliacik, Mary Poliacik Jr., Stephen Poliacik. 2nd row (the children): Emily Poliacik (in Mary’s lap), Mildred Fano, Helen Komezda and Martha Hechko. 3rd row: Mary Tomko Poliacik, Sophie Tomko Fano, Anna Tomko Komezda and Susan Tomko Hechko. Back row: John Fano, John Poliacik, Stefan Kaliaček (a friend of John Fano’s from his home town of Kolarovice, Slovakia), John Poliacik Jr. and Mildred Hechko. The picture was probably taken at the Poliacik house, in Somerville, NJ.



Louis and Wilhemina Czenker, and baby Adolph, ~1919 in Cleveland.

Sophie Tomko roomed with a friend, Sophie Macko (pronounced “Mots-ko”), for a year or so sometime in the 1910’s. Sophie Macko was from Štrba too, and the two of them were lifelong friends.⁷ Susan helped her sister Sophie get her first job, working for a minister (undoubtedly Lutheran), perhaps when they were living in East Portchester. Sophie also worked for a time rolling cigars for a cigar company in Manhattan.⁹

Sophie Tomko met her husband-to-be, John Fano, in New York City at a sokol.^{†7} They were married in February of 1917 at Holy Trinity Slovak Lutheran Church on Manhattan’s lower east side (Sophie Macko was Sophie Tomko’s maid-of-honor).^{219,7} John was 24 and Sophie was 21 when they married. John worked as a stationary engineer (a foreman) at an ice plant, and by

June he and Sophie were living at 432 East 73rd Street.^{220,219}

From his first appearance in the New York city directories Joseph Hechko was usually listed as an electrician, until 1912.²¹⁰ Once, in 1904-1905, he was listed under Locksmiths and Bellhangers. (A bellhanger is “one whose business it is to put up and repair bells, bell wires, etc.”).²²¹ From 1915 to 1921, though, he was listed as a locksmith, as in the 1910 Census. There was a close relationship between the three occupations, it seems. In the directories of some years, under “Locksmiths and Bellhangers,” you could find “☞ See also Electricians.” We think that at this time, at the beginning of the 20th Century when electrification was still new, these occupations were all involved in house and store security, which may have been the focus of Joseph Hechko’s business. From about 1911 to about 1921 the business was at 152 Lenox Avenue. The family lived at 1684 Park Avenue from about 1915 to about 1917. In September of 1918, according to Joseph’s World War I Draft Registration Card, he and “Sussie” lived at 303 West 113th Street. Joseph was an “Electro



Mike Tomko, of “Five Cousins,” in his WWI uniform, ~1918.

† The Theodor Kundtz Company, one of Cleveland’s leading industrial giants in the early 1900’s, made automobile bodies for many companies. They also made bicycle wheels and fine cabinetry. The company in 1910 employed over 2500 workers. Theodor Kundtz himself, born in Hungary in 1852, is credited with fashioning sewing machines into functional art.²⁴⁸

* A sokol is a Slavic ethnic club centered on gymnastic and physical fitness training, but extending into moral and intellectual training as well.



Sophie and John Fano, and Mildred, ~1922.

John Fano (Americanized to “Fann” in 1939)

Jan Fano, son of Daniel and Magdalene (Bugala) Fano, was born in May of 1893 in Kolárovice, about 70 miles east of Štrba in present-day Slovakia. His mother had been married before and she had two daughters by that marriage.⁷ Jan had an older brother, Daniel Jr., who was born in Kolárovice in June of 1890.

^{7,8,223} And there was a third “brother”—Daniel Sr. was an aide to a Hungarian general, who had a son by a girlfriend, and Daniel Sr. brought the baby home from the Army. He and Magdalene named the boy “Rudy Fano” and raised him as their own. As soon as each boy finished grade school in Kolárovice, Daniel Sr. arranged an apprenticeship for him in Vienna. Daniel Jr. was sent there to learn the trade of tailoring; John was sent to be a shoemaker; and Rudy was sent to be a businessman, in the movie theater business.⁸



John Fano, ~1920.

John was fourteen years old when he started his apprenticeship to the shoemaker in Vienna. When he first arrived he decided to wake up early so that he could say his prayers before starting work. The other apprentice boy there was still sleeping. The shoemaker’s wife noticed John up early, and she felt that as long as he was up he might as well start working. The third time this happened John decided, “To heck with the prayers,” and he arose when the other boy awoke. By the time John finished his apprenticeship he spoke fluent Viennese German.⁷

In December of 1913, at age 20 and back in Kolárovice, Jan decided to go to America. He knew that if he didn’t go then he would be drafted into the Hungarian Army. From the window of a train Jan had seen men training as horsemen for the Hungarian Army. When a man fell off his horse the Hungarian officer in charge would gallop over and beat the man with a rod. Jan did not consider himself Hungarian, and he wanted no part of the Hungarian Army.⁸ He went to America with another person from Kolárovice, Melicher Keczik, a 37-year-old plumber. Both of them were going to join Melicher’s nephew in New York City. Jan’s occupation was shoemaker.²²⁴



John’s father, Daniel Fano.

In New York City Jan was “John.” He had never had any real interest in shoemaking, but the German he had learned during his apprenticeship came in very handy. He was soon talking with German engineers in office buildings and he decided that that was what he wanted to do. He went to school, became an engineer, and was soon working in office buildings himself.^{7,8} By the time he met Sophie Tomko he was working as a stationary engineer for the Knickerbocker Ice Company, an ice plant at 70th Street and the East River. On his World War I draft registration card, John is described as of tall height and medium build, with brown hair and brown eyes.²²⁰

Jan’s brother Daniel also came to America, in 1921, followed by his wife and son in 1925.^{225,226} Two more sons were born in America. Daniel too dispensed with his trade, and instead operated a dry-cleaning business in the Harlem area of New York City.⁸



John D. and Mildred Fano, ~1924.



Mary Poliacik, Emily, Mary Jr., John; Sophie Fano holding John D., Mildred; and Stephen Poliacik, ~1924 in Somerville, NJ.

Locksmith,” working for himself.²⁰¹ From about 1918 to about 1921 his family lived at 364 West 121st Street.²¹⁰

Sophie and John Fano’s first child, daughter Mildred Magdalene, was born in July of 1918, in Manhattan. Sophie and Susie did not name their first-born daughters after anyone in the family—it’s just that “Mildred” was a popular name at that time. Mildred Fano was about the same age as Martha Hechko, and the two of them were to be very close friends throughout their early years, while they both lived in Manhattan.⁷

By January of 1920 Joseph Hechko had left his wife Susie. As Susie herself told of it later, “He left, and never came back.” Susie had been critical for some time of Joseph’s gambling, and of the amount of time he spent in bars. Their daughter Mildred recalled to her children how she had often been sent to look for her father in bars, when she was a little girl, and how frightened she always was. She’d look under the swinging doors, to see if he was in there. She hated going in because the men were loud, and she dreaded having their attention focussed on her. Susie felt that Joseph was not a caring provider to her and the children. She blamed him for the way Martha turned out, complaining that he did not provide the family with money enough to buy nourishing food. Susie felt that



Mildred Fano and Martha Hechko, in Central Park across the street from The Plaza (the hotel of “Heloise” fame), ~1927.



Martha Hechko and Mildred Fano, ~1930, at the Turon farm in Greenville.



Benjamin, Helen and Anna
Kobezda, ~1926.



Paul Tomko, brother of the Tomko sisters, ~1928.

Martha was fine when she was born, and that she would have turned out alright if she'd been properly cared for.^{4,1} (In light of present-day medical knowledge, though, perhaps Joseph was held overly-accountable for Martha's whooping cough.)

John and Sophie Fano helped Susie after Joseph left. They moved out of their smaller apartment and into hers, to help her with the rent.⁷ In January of 1920, at the time of the federal census, they were all living at the apartment building at 364 West 121st Street. John was an engineer in an office building at the time. Usually, this occupation would have meant that the person maintained a stationary steam engine which provided electrical power to operate the elevator, the electrical lighting, and whatever else required power at the office building. He may also have been in charge of the entire electrical system and all the



Sophie ("Auntie") Daniel, at right,
and perhaps her husband John
Daniel, in the late 1920's.

machinery there. In John's case, though, the office building was probably the Knickerbocker Ice Company (where he worked in 1918), in which case the primary purpose of the stationary engine may have been to power a refrigeration system to keep the ice frozen. John was a wage worker, not a salary worker. Sophie was a housekeeper for an apartment, and "Sussie" was an assistant housekeeper. Mildred Hechko, age 9, was attending school, Martha Hechko was $1^{10}/_{12}$, and Mildred Fano was $1^{6}/_{12}$. There were 53 people in fifteen households, all renting, at 364 West 121st Street.²²² By 1922 the Fano family had moved to the apartment building next door, at 362 West 121st Street.²¹⁰

We have not been able to locate Joseph Hechko and his three children by his first wife in the 1920 Census. Joseph continued to appear for a while longer in the New York City city directories. In 1922-1923, and again in 1925, he was listed as a salesman with a home address of 148 Lenox Avenue. His last appearance in the city directories was in 1931, and he was living at 46 West 93rd Street, with no occupation listed.²¹⁰

Joseph's children by his first wife had grown up to love their step-mother, who brought them up from when they were very young. Susie was a good mother to them, and the only mother they were able to get



Mildred Fano, ~1930, wearing a Slovakian dress mail-ordered from Slovakia for her, a surprise gift from her parents. The blouse is a pale yellow and the dress itself is very colorful.

to know. She was strict with them, but they still loved her. They remained in contact with her after Joseph left, and took them. Joseph Jr., in particular, was always very good to his step-mother, and he remained close to her for the rest of her life.⁷

Sometime in the 1920's or early 1930's Susan Hechko was head chef at the Lincoln School, near Columbia University, where Nelson Rockefeller went to school from 3rd to 12th grade.⁷ (The Rockefeller-backed General Education Board was the driving force behind the creation and the funding of this progressive school, to which many Columbia University professors sent their children.)²²⁷ It would have been between 1917 (when the school opened) and 1926, or else between 1929 and 1933 that Susan worked there. In July of 1926 Susan, who was living in the Bronx at this time, purchased a 128-acre farm in New Baltimore, Greene County, New York. This farm was in the Catskill Mountains, and perhaps it reminded Susan of her homeland in Slovakia.[†] She wanted to make it a resort where tourists would lodge, and she worked very hard to make this happen. She hired her sister Mary Poliacik's sons John Jr. and Steve for a short time, when they were of college age, to set up and head up a program of activities for the guests, involving games such as badminton and shuffleboard. But she felt that they weren't serious enough about the job. In their defense, John and Steve couldn't really get the guests interested in such a program because the guests wanted only to hike a

little, to rock on the porch a lot, and to enjoy Susan's excellent cooking. Programmed activities held little appeal for them. Having nothing better to do, John and Steve played badminton and shuffleboard against each other. In July of 1929 Susan gave up on the tourist lodge idea and sold the farm, moving back to New York City.^{7,228,229}

Anna Koberzda left her husband Steven sometime around 1922, taking her youngest daughter Helen with her. Benjamin and Anna stayed with their father. We don't know why Anna left, nor why she took Helen and left Benjamin and Anna. She and Steven divorced around 1923. Steven remained unmarried, raising Benjamin and Anna by himself. Anna re-married in November of 1924, to Louis Paul Czenkner.^{7,10}

Lajos (pronounced "Lah-yos") Czenkner, son of Josef Czenkner,

[†] The John and Susan Hvizdak family of Coeymans, in Albany county, and the George and Mary Turon family of Greenville as well, may have played a role in Susan's decision to move to New Baltimore. These were people she knew from Štrba who moved to that area around the same time that she did. The Hvizdaks were farmers, who raised twelve children, and the Turons were dairy farmers who raised nine children. Mrs. Turon ran a boarding house, and Mildred and John D. Fano spent a month or two there during the summer of 1933, when Mildred was 15 and John was 9. Mildred went back there again for a two week vacation when she was out of high school. The Hvizdaks did not take in boarders, but Sophie, Mildred and John D. visited there for a week in the summer of 1929.⁷



Mildred Suzanne Hechko, 1933.

was born in October of 1888 in Nădrag, a village in Timiș county in the Transylvania region of Romania. He first came to America at age 24 in June of 1912, travelling with Tstvan Trinko, also from Nădrag, and also going to Cleveland. They were both German-speakers, and both “iron founders.” In America Lajos became “Louis,” just as Tstvan became “Steven.” In 1917, when he registered for the World War I Draft, Louis was a molder for the Superior Foundry Company, in Cleveland. His mother was solely dependent on his support. Around this time he married Wilhemina (“Mina”) Schier, daughter of John Schier of Cleveland. The Schiers were also German-speaking Romanian immigrants.

Wilhemina was born around 1896 in “Cetrim,” in present-day Romania. Their son Adolf was born in October of 1918 in Cleveland. In 1921 they went back to Romania, and in November of 1923 they returned to America. However, Wilhemina fell ill during the return voyage. At Ellis Island she was diagnosed as having pulmonary tuberculosis, and she was not allowed to enter the U.S. She was put in the hospital on the island, and she died there in late January of 1924.²³⁰⁻²³³

In 1930 Louis and Anna Czenkner were living at 4265 West 150th Street in Cleveland, with 12-year-old Helen and 11-year-old Adolf. Louis was a laborer for a carbon company. They owned their home. Stephen Kobezda, with 17-year-old Benjamin and 16-year-old Anna, lived at 14507 Elizabeth Street in



At Susan Hechko's farm in New Baltimore, Greene County, NY, ~1936.



Washington Irving High School Players Club, May 1932. Mildred Hechko is 4th from the left in the back row.

Cleveland. Stephen too owned his home. His occupation was “picture frame & <unreadable> co.” in the Census record.^{234,235}

Paul Tomko, Susan’s brother who didn’t come to America, married Anna (we don’t know her surname) sometime prior to 1928. They lived in Štrba, and we think they had children who died young. In 1928 Paul went to Australia, arriving at Sydney in February. Anna stayed in Štrba, and Paul sent money home to support her. She was not to see Paul again for 25 years, but he continued to write and send money.^{8,7,236}

We haven’t found either Joseph or Susie Hechko in the 1930 U.S. Census, but we’ve found Joseph’s children. They had all moved to the outer boroughs of New York City. Joseph Jr. had changed his surname to “Hecker” by April of 1930, and he and his wife Sallie were renting an apartment in Brooklyn at 620 Crescent Street. Joseph was 26 years old and Sallie was 22. Their daughter Marilyn was less than a year old. Joseph worked as an accountant in an office. Sallie’s name was “Sadie” when Joseph married her in April of 1926. She was the daughter of Samuel and Rose (Lefkowitz) Cohen. She was born around 1907 in Brooklyn, and her parents were born in England.

Perhaps Sadie changed her given name to “Sallie” when Joseph changed his surname to “Hecker.”^{237,238}

Helen Hechko had married Frank M. Doyne, son of John and Mary (Ducas) Doyne, in February of 1927 in the Bronx.²³⁹ In April of 1930 they were renting an apartment there in the Bronx at 2535

Aqueduct Avenue. Frank, a salesman, was 27 and Helen was 22. Their son Richard F. was less than a year old. And Rudolf Hechko, age 24, who worked as a clerk in an office, was living with them.²⁴⁰ Rudolf kept his original “Hechko” surname. He never changed it.⁷

John and Sophie Fano moved to Brooklyn around 1926. Their daughter Mildred remembers the day her fourth grade class was taken to a main highway somewhere in Brooklyn, each of them given a small American flag to wave as they formed part of a huge reception for Charles Lindbergh when he came back to New York after his historic solo non-stop New York to Paris flight in May of 1927.⁷

John Fano worked at the Rubel Ice & Coal plant in Brooklyn, Rubel’s first and biggest plant. Mildred recalls being sent there to get cakes of ice, which she hauled back in a little red wagon. When Rubel’s opened its last plant in Queens Village (in Jamaica, Queens Borough), around 1928 or 1929, John was assigned there, and he moved his family there to avoid a long commute.⁷ They lived at 10813 221st Street, which is where they were in April of 1930 at the time of that year’s federal census. They rented a house valued at \$850, and they had a radio set. Their second child, son John D. (we’ll call him that henceforth, to distinguish him from his father), had been born around 1924. Mildred was now 12. John was a stationary engineer for an ice company (the Rubel Ice & Coal Company)⁷. Both John and Sophie were naturalized U.S. citizens by



John and Sophie Fano, August, 1933.



Paul Tomko in Australia, 1936.



Martha Hechko, ~1936.

1930.²⁴¹

Auntie Daniel's husband John died in 1930.²⁴² Sophie Fano took her son with her to Ohio to attend her uncle's funeral, since John D. was too little to be left home, alone for much of the day. John D. was in first grade at the time, and he missed more classes than he could make up after he returned home; so he had to repeat the grade the next year, to his great distress.⁸

In 1931, according to the NYC city directory of that year, Joseph Hecker was living at 363 Cypress Avenue. And Rudolph Hechko was living at 2533 Aqueduct Avenue.²¹⁰

Susan Hechko must have held the mortgage herself to the farm she sold in Greene County in July of 1929, since she was forced to file suit in the Greene County Supreme Court against Jacob Scheyer, the purchaser. (Note that the Great Depression began with the stock market crash in late October of 1929.) In July of 1933 the Greene County Supreme Court ordered that the property be auctioned off by Percy W. Decker, Referee. This he did in September, at the front door of the Greene County Courthouse in Catskill. Susan herself bought the property back, for \$2500, money which must have come back to her, minus court fees.²⁴³ Her address in September of 1933, as given in the Greene County land records, prior to moving back to the farm, was No. 25-98 36th Street, Astoria, Long Island (across the East River from Manhattan). Susan also made her first and last appearance in the New York City city directories at about this time. In the 1933-1934 edition, Susan Hechko was rooming at 118 West 13th Street.²¹⁰

In late November of 1936, at age 26, Mildred Suzanne Hechko applied for a Social Security number. At that time she was living at 203 West 85th Street in Manhattan, and she was working for the Home Insurance Company, at 59 Maiden Lane in Manhattan. According to the caption on a picture in her photo album she worked there from 1930 to 1940. (My mother was a typist, and she typed very fast.)^{244,1}

Joseph Hecker and Rudolph Hechko also applied for Social Security numbers in late November or early December of 1936. This is when the Social Security system got started, and many people were encouraged or required to obtain their SSN's. Joseph Hecker either gave himself a middle name at this time, or perhaps he acquired his middle name when he changed his surname to Hecker. The name on his application form reads, "Joseph Charles (Fictitious) Hecker." Presumably, this is what appeared on his Social Security card! He was living at 1 Elton Street in Brooklyn at this time, and he worked for W & J Tiebout at 118 Chambers Street in NYC. Rudolph Hechko's mailing address was 1566 Hoe Avenue (c/o Magasy) in the Bronx, and he was unemployed.^{245,246}

My grandfather Joseph Hechko died at age 69 in July of 1943 (six months before I was born) at Creedmoor State Hospital, in Queens



John D. and Mildred Fano, ~1937. This portrait of them, in Slovakian dress, was a present to their parents.



We think these are Susan Hechko's stepchildren in this picture, but no one knows for certain. So this would be Rudy, Helen, Susan, Joe and his daughter Marilyn, Mildred and Martha, probably at the farm in New Baltimore, ~1936.



Anna and Louis Czenkner, and Lillian, Easter 1938.

Village, Long Island, after a stay there of nine years. Creedmoor is a psychiatric institution, and Joseph was afflicted with non-alcoholic psychosis and chronic hallucinosis. He was buried in St. Michael's Cemetery.²⁴⁷ His daughter Helen remained fairly close to her half-sister Mildred, and she did what she could to help Susan and Martha, but she was very busy helping her husband Frank Doyne in the business that he had.⁷ And Joseph Hechko's son Joseph remained close to Susan, and to Susan's sister Sophie's family. Sometime in the 1950's Joseph Hecker married a second time, to a woman named Christine.⁷ The story of Joseph Hechko ends here, but the story of Susan Tomko Hechko continues in the next chapter.



Susan Hechko's farm in New Baltimore, as it appears today (2007).



The barn at Susan Hechko's farm in New Baltimore that was converted to a dance hall, as it appears today (2007).

Chapter 3

Susan Tomko Hechko and Fred Kummer, or Gramma and “Uncle Fred” †

My grandmother Susan Hechko ran the 128 acre farm in New Baltimore, in Greene County, New York, five miles or so west of the Hudson River. She ran the farm by herself, during the Great Depression years. Martha was with her, but Martha couldn't have helped her much. The farm was on Staco Road, the first farm down the hill to the right after you reach Staco Road from Feather Bed Lane. It's still there. There's a porch across the front and down the left side of the big old farmhouse. Gramma still boarded tourists there after she bought back the farm in 1933. A neighbor of hers, Irving Smith, who was a young boy in the 1930's, recalls that the Hechkos (he pronounces the name “Hecko”) were good neighbors, and that Mrs. Hechko was a nice woman who worked very hard trying to make a go of it on her own.³⁰¹ Gramma had a cow or two, and Irving used to keep her fences mended so the cows would stay put. Irving recalls too that she had a barn (across the driveway from the house) fixed up and made into a dance hall. “They did a beautiful job on the floor. And she had dances there, ... for a little while.” My mother's cousin Mildred Schmidt tells us that, if you ever wondered to Aunt Susan how she could manage such a farm by herself, she'd raise a fist and declare with fervor and a smile, “We come from good stock!”⁷

In 1936 Susan Hechko purchased from neighbor Gurney Dalton a right-of-way for a water pipe across a corner of his farm to the property of Staco Cemetery.³⁰² This water pipe most likely went to a spring under a rock cliff across the road from Staco Cemetery.³⁰¹ There's a fast-moving brook there now that falls over the rock ledge and flows around Gramma's old farm.

Fred Kummer (whom Gramma hadn't married yet) lived up the road—up Feather Bed Lane and a little ways up to the left on Hillcrest Road. He and his brother Frank lived there.³⁰¹ This was the farm that we—my sister Judy and my brothers Jim and Bob, and I—remember visiting when we were young. We knew that Gramma's first farm was down the road, but we never saw it. The Hechko farm and the Kummer farm straddled the town line between New Baltimore and Greenville. The Kummer farm was actually owned by Frank and his sister Emma.



Susan and Fred Kummer on their farm in Greenville, NY, in the 1950's.



The crutches were Susan's. She fell off a ladder picking apples.

† My sister Judith Gurka Bensch and my brothers James and Robert Gurka have helped me to narrate this chapter. My mother's cousins Mildred Fann Schmidt and Lillian Czenkner Reinke have contributed, too. Thanks to all for helping me tell my grandmother's story!

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Fred Kummer was born in April of 1889 in Limpach, a village in the “canton” of Bern, Switzerland.<sup>303,304</sup> His parents, who also were born in Switzerland, were Jakob Kummer and Kathrina Sutter.<sup>305</sup> Fred’s given name in Switzerland was “Fritz.” His younger brother Franz (Frank) was also born in Limpach, in August of 1890.<sup>306</sup> Emma was an older sister, born in September of 1875.<sup>307</sup> And Fritz and Franz had an older brother, too—Ernst, who was born in Limpach in October of 1883.<sup>308,309</sup> Whether there were other brothers or sisters we don’t know. Their native language (and that of their parents) was German. Emma Kummer was the first of the Kummer family to emigrate to America, in 1895, at age 20.<sup>310</sup> At age 23 she married William Münch, a painter in Manhattan.<sup>307</sup> Their first child, William Jr., born in 1900, died before 1910. Three other children, Alfred, Henry and Helen, were born in 1905, 1907 and 1909, respectively.<sup>311</sup> Emma’s husband died in April of 1910, at age 39, leaving Emma with three small children and no good source of income.<sup>312</sup> In September of 1911 she married Otto Schnare, a piano tuner in Manhattan, born in Germany.<sup>313</sup> Otto was fifteen years older than Emma and he had been married once before, but he and his first wife had had no children.<sup>314,315</sup> Otto apparently adopted Emma’s children and gave them his surname.<sup>316,317</sup>



Frank Schmidt and Fred Kummer, in the 1950’s.

Ernst Kummer emigrated to the U.S. in March of 1907, at age 23, from Bibern, Switzerland.<sup>309</sup> He emigrated with a friend, and they headed for Dow City, in Crawford County, on the western side of Iowa, to join people they knew, and to start their own farms. Ernst married around 1913, and he and his wife Clara raised a large family (eight children by 1930) on their stock farm in Union Township in Crawford County, with a mailing address of Dow City.<sup>318,319</sup> Fritz emigrated in October of 1913, and Franz in March of 1914, both at age 24.<sup>304, 320</sup> Fritz was a blacksmith when he emigrated.



At Somerville in the mid-1930’s: Back row: Steve and John Poliacik, Eleanore Kobezda and Mildred Fano. Front: Emily Poliacik, Ben Kobezda. Joe Poliacik lying on the grass, and John Poliacik Sr. at right.

They had both declared for the ships’ manifests that they intended to join their brother in Iowa, but Fritz changed his declaration to read that he intended to join his sister Emma Schnare in Manhattan.

In 1917 Fritz and Franz Kummer were farmers, working on their own in Denison, Iowa, within a few miles of Dow City. On June 5th of that year, all men across the nation between the ages of 21 and 31, whether or not they were U.S. citizens, were required

to register for the World War I draft. Both Fritz and Franz registered that day at the local draft board in Dension township. Each declared that he was not a citizen of the U.S., but of Switzerland, and each declared that both his mother and his father were solely dependent on him for support (they were each claiming exemption from the draft for that reason). Each also declared that he had served six months of military service as a soldier in the Swiss Army—Fritz in the infantry and Franz in the artillery.<sup>303,306</sup> Ernst registered for the draft in September of 1918 (when the draft was opened up to include men between the ages of 18 and 45).<sup>308</sup> He had become a U.S. citizen the year before. In records subsequent to this he used the name “Ernest.”



John and Maria Poliacik and family, ~1940. From the left: Steve, John Sr., John Jr., Maria, Joe, Marie and Emily.

By January of 1920 Fritz was married and using the name “Fred.”<sup>321</sup> He and his wife Bertha (nee Muff), who was four years younger and also born in Switzerland, lived on a general farm in Washington Township, Crawford County, Iowa. They owned the farm, and it was mortgaged. Fred spoke English but Bertha did not. They had an eight-month-old son named “Fredrick.”

Franz left Iowa at about the time Fritz married. In April of 1918 he and Emma bought their first farm in Greene County, New York.<sup>322,323</sup> The farm included 93 acres of farm land and 3½ acres of woodlot. The property included a right-of-way leading to it, and there was a school lot in a corner which would revert to the property when the school ceased to exist. This was the farm which Fred and Susan would later own, the one which I knew when I was young. In May of 1919 Frank (Franz started using the name “Frank” at this time) and Emma bought a second farm in Greenville—75 acres.<sup>324</sup> In January of 1920, according to the federal census that year, they were living on one of these farms in Greenville.<sup>316</sup> Frank was 29, Emma was 44, and Otto was 60, a woodworker, a piano builder. Alfred, Henry and Helen Schare were 14, 12 and 11, all attending school. Emma and Otto were both U.S. citizens, both naturalized in 1906. Frank and Emma bought a third farm in April of 1922—147 acres of farmland and 15 acres of woodlot in Coxsackie (closer to the Hudson River) known in the area as “the Gee farm.”<sup>325</sup> Frank and Emma always bought and sold property together. Otto was never a partner in the ownership.



Fred & Susan Kummer, and Barbara Gurka, in Torrington ~1956.

By April of 1930, the time of the 1930 federal census, Fred had joined Frank and Emma, and they were all living together on the farm—a dairy farm—in Coxsackie.<sup>317</sup> Otto had died by this time. Frank

was a farmer and Fred was a general carpenter. Alfred, 24, and Henry, 22, were farm laborers, and Helen, 21, was there too. Frank was now a naturalized citizen of the U.S. but Fred still was not. Fred had joined Frank and Emma because Bertha had left him, taking the children with her. Fred and Bertha were divorced in Milwaukee in 1925. Susan and Fred would later kid about being two people who were right for each other, but not for their previous spouses, who had deserted them.<sup>7</sup>

In March of 1937 Frank and Emma bought lots totalling 101 acres in Athens, the next township south of Coxsackie.<sup>326</sup> We don't know much more about Frank and Emma. They sold the Gee farm in 1949 to Emma's son Alfred and his wife.<sup>327</sup> Frank was unmarried at this time, but he later married "a Parringer" (or more likely, a "Preminger"), and they lived in or near Ravena.<sup>328,329</sup> In July of 1957 he was living off Route 81 in Climax (near Coxsackie), working as a farmer for Albright Brothers, of Athens.<sup>330</sup> We don't know when Emma died, but Frank died in August of 1983, at age 93.<sup>331</sup>



Sophie Fann.

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In December of 1939 Fred Kummer applied for a Social Security Number.³³² He was working at this time for a company called Reis & Matter, Inc., of West Coxsackie—he'd probably just started, and was required to apply for the SSN. His post office address was Hannacroix (about four miles east of the farm on Hillcrest Road). In late October of 1943 Fred and Susan Hechko married, at the home of a gospel minister in Greenville.³⁰⁵ It's possible that Susan might have married Fred earlier, but wasn't able to get (or wasn't willing to go through the process of getting) a divorce from Joseph Hechko. Or it may be that Fred knew she was married, and didn't pursue her until he'd heard (probably from her after she'd heard from one of her stepchildren) that Joseph had died in July of 1943.³³³ We've heard that Susan was happy with Fred, whereas she had not been very happy up to then. Fred made her laugh, something she hadn't been seen to do in a long time.^{7,†}



Joe Hecker and his wife Christine, in 1958.

Susan sold her farm in New Baltimore in September of 1944.³³⁴ In February of 1948 she and Fred purchased from Frank and Emma the 93 acre farm in Greenville, with 3½ acres of woodlot and the school lot in the corner, which they were probably renting from Frank and Emma up to then.³³⁵ We always thought that the farm was Gramma's, so perhaps she paid for it with the proceeds from selling her own farm. The farm was off Hillcrest Road, just south of where Feather Bed Lane runs into it. Our earliest memories of visiting Gramma and Uncle Freddie date from about this time. She was our only grandparent still living, and we

† Mildred Fann Schmidt and her husband Frank and their two daughters, Millie and Joanie, often visited her Aunt Susan's farm in Greenville, "because it was such an interesting place to be." And Fred was always happy to have them there.



Martha Hechko, Susan Kummer and Millie Schmidt (daughter of Mildred & Frank), on the farm in Greenville, ~1960.

four—Judy, Jim, Bob and I—were her only grandchildren. We loved visiting her, and she always loved to see us coming in the long dirt driveway, greeting us from the front porch of the farmhouse with open arms and an “ai-Yi-yi-Yi-yi-Yi!” We loved Uncle Fred like a grandfather. He was always very good and kind to us, and he made us feel welcome there. He was nice enough to talk to kids. He always dressed in overalls and a flat farmer’s cap. And he smoked cigars. We remember the cigar smoke when we walked in. He had stacks of empty wooden cigar boxes in one room, and we were delighted when he gave some to us. So we children were always welcomed in, but once our parents settled down to talk to Gramma (in Slovakian) we were on our own. ¹⁻⁴

The farm was a chicken farm in those days. We collected eggs for Gramma and Uncle Fred when we were there. And there was a large vegetable garden. We don’t know who tended it—we guess they took a break from tending the garden while we were there. We liked to pull up carrots, and eat them fresh from the garden. They were so good! There was an apple orchard off to the right of the drive leading in, and we believe we heard that my grandmother hurt her ankle falling out of an apple tree. She was picking apples, probably, and perhaps in reality she fell off a ladder. She walked with crutches for a long time, and then with a cane, and that was the story behind it. Fred had bee hives, also on the right as you came in, just before the apple orchard. It was the bees’ job to keep the apple orchard pollinated. Beyond the beehives and beside the orchard was a big barn, and there was a ring of chicken coops between it and the huge old farmhouse on the left. The garden was in front of the farmhouse, to the left.

The farm was on the top of a hill. A lot of the land was cleared, and you could see mountains for miles and miles. Maybe it reminded Gramma of the Tatras in Slovakia, and maybe it reminded Uncle Fred of the Alps in Switzerland. (Uncle Fred could yodel, but it wasn’t easy to get him to do it. You had to get a beer or two in him first.)⁷ So maybe the mountain memories were part of the attraction for them. The mountains in Greene County were a lot more tame than the Tatras and the Alps, of course.

Gramma took us for long walks along the road, to pick strawberries which grew in patches by the roadside. We were along to help her pick them. We loved the farm, the wide open spaces, the quiet, off-the-beaten-path road, and the safeness of it all. We loved going in and out of all the rooms in the old farmhouse, and sitting in the sun on the sunporch in the front. ¹



The Tomko sisters in 1958: Maria Poliacik, Anna Czenkner, Susan Kummer and Sophie Fann.



Adolf Czenkner, Montana, 1930's.



Carol Ludrovsky on Lady Jane, and Lillian Czenkner, 1950.



Anna Kobezda Ludrovsky, and daughter Carol, 1942.



Maria Poliacik, at sister Anna's farm in Homerville, Ohio, 1957.



Eleanore and Ben Kobezda, and Steve Kobezda in the middle.



Lillian and Gene Reinke, back right, and children Ken and Becky in front, and Maria Poliacik, 1970.



Maria Poliacik, Sophie and John Fann, and Anna Czenkner.

**“Five
Cousins”
Pictures**



Anna Miklovic and her daughters Therese (center) and Mildred, and Mike Tomko's son Don in front, Easter 1935.



Auntie Daniel, Sophie Fann and Anna Miklovic.



Mike and Ada Tomko, and Molly (we think) and Paul Tomko, seated; Anna Miklovic at top right, and daughter Mildred to her right; we're not sure of the others; 1932.



John Tomko and his wife Mary, ~1935 in Cleveland.



Paul Tomko (of the Five Cousins, right) and his wife Molly and two of her sons (the one next to her is Matt Muzar).



Mike and Ada Tomko.



Susan Kummer and Martha Hechko in Florida in 1962.

Gramma told a story about when she first came over from Slovakia. She didn't know English very well then, and she was at a store trying to purchase a colander, but she didn't know what to call it. So she explained what she wanted this way, "Macaroni shtop, water go ahead."¹ We always felt that Gramma spoke English very well. My mother and she, though, almost always spoke in Slovakian (we guess that's what it was), both of them very fluent; but neither of them ever spoke it to us. We never grasped it.

We all visited Gramma and Uncle Fred a couple times a year. When Judy and I were teenagers, or maybe a little younger, we had a special bedroom at the farm that was "ours." One time when we went to visit, though, Judy and I noticed that there were pretty hairbrushes on the dresser in our room. Nobody had told us anything, but it was apparent that the room was no longer ours. That was when we first got to meet Aunt Martha, my mother's sister.¹ Gramma had had her

in an institution prior to that, an institution for girls who had difficulty coping with the outside world. It was Uncle Fred who persuaded Gramma to bring Martha home to the farm. Martha lived in a group home for a while, with three or four other girls like herself and an adult supervisor who tried to teach them skills such as cooking and taking care of themselves, so that they would be able to cope on their own. This may have been a step in preparation for her to go home to the farm. She lived with grandmother for a long time after that.⁷

Martha loved to wash dishes. She could spend a couple hours washing a couple of them. Shortly after she came to live at the farm she asked to wash the dinner dishes, so Gramma let her. Gramma sat in the living room, with Fred, listening to Martha wash the dishes. Gramma was a person who liked to get things done lickety-split, though, and it soon began to get to her, how long it was taking Martha to do the dishes. When she could stand it no longer she got up, announcing to Fred that she was going to help Martha finish up the dishes. "Let her be, Sue," said Fred, "She's not doing any harm, and she's happy." So Gramma let Martha finish the dishes on her own. Uncle Fred had a calming effect on Gramma.⁷

After Gramma hurt her ankle Auntie Daniel came and stayed with her and Fred for a while, to help Gramma out. Auntie Daniel never saw much need to learn English—most of the time Slovakian served her well enough. She used to drive Uncle Fred bananas when they'd be sitting, listening to the radio, and she would interrupt again and again, asking, "What did he say?" Gramma would try to tell her what was being said, but she and Uncle Fred would miss hearing half of it. (Auntie Daniel used to drive John Fann bananas this same way.) Uncle Fred had to tend the apple orchard by himself after Gramma got hurt. He used to ride a tractor



Anna Czenkner and Maria Poliacik, 1970.

along, spraying the trees on the run. It became too much for him after a few years, though, and he began to let the apple trees go untended, and he concentrated instead on raising chickens and selling eggs. Uncle Fred loved chicken farming, since he didn't have to get up so early. ⁷

Uncle Fred died in May of 1961, when I was seventeen. ^{336,337} We heard that he was sitting at the dining room table at the farm, and that he just collapsed. My grandmother sold the farm a year later and bought a trailer lot at 37 Van Dyck Street in Coxsackie. ^{338,339} She left almost all her furniture at the farm since she now had little room for it. The trailer was parallel with the street, and there were other trailers on the street as well, all on the left as you headed toward the Hudson River, with a huge farm in the back. The people in the homes on that side of the street probably all bought their land from the farmer. My husband Richard and I visited my grandmother there several times. Some time after Gramma moved to the trailer the old farm house burned down. All her nice furniture was lost.

Gramma and Martha visited Gramma's sister Anna Czenkner at her farm in Homerville, Ohio (about an hour west of Cleveland) in 1962. Anna's daughter Lillian Reinke recalls the visit. Martha for some reason decided that she wanted red shoes, a red purse and a red hat—and she just had to have them. They took her to a store in Lodi, the nearest town, but that store didn't have what Martha wanted. Martha was very unhappy. Later that year Anna got a letter from Gramma containing a picture of Martha and herself in Florida. Martha was wearing red shoes and holding a red purse. ¹⁰



Susan Kummer and her great-granddaughter Susan Clark (who was named after her), in 1968. These are frames from a Super 8mm movie.



Another picture of Susan Kummer and Susan Clark in 1968.

Towards the end of her life Gramma became very worried over what was to become of Martha when she was no longer around to care for her. She finally decided to put Martha in an institution for the mentally handicapped in Millerton, New York, about twenty miles southeast of Coxsackie, near the Connecticut state line. We think our parents helped her make this decision. It was my sister Judy who was sent to help Gramma get Martha there. It was in the winter of 1965 or 1966, and the weather was blizzard-like, but Judy had to go anyway because there was a deadline of some sort. It was a memorable trip for Judy. She had a Volkswagen Beetle at that time, and it was crowded in the tiny car. And she got stuck in the snow on the way there. It was Martha, who had no idea where they were going, who shoveled them out. They finally made it to the institution, and left Martha there. We're sure it was very difficult for Gramma to do this, but it turned out to be a relatively good place for Martha to be. Judy

got into a bad accident on the way back, but she and Gramma were alright. When she got back to the trailer she had to shovel her way into Gramma's driveway. Judy recalls that it was a long and miserable day!¹

We visited Martha at the institution from time to time. Martha was more mentally alert than most of the patients. She would say, "These people are dumb! I don't belong here!" She had a job at the institution, unpaid, making beds and what-not, and she never saw herself as being a mentally deficient person.¹

In 1969 Gramma sold the trailer lot and came to live with us in Connecticut.³⁴⁰ She was 84 years old at this time. I think she first lived with my parents for a short time. Then she lived with Judy and her husband Cal for six months or so, and then with my husband Richard and me, and our two little children, in Forestville, part of Bristol, Connecticut. It was my mother who moved her around. Gramma was becoming senile, and she suffered delusions somewhat. Finally, my mother moved her down to Somerville, NJ, to live with Gramma's sister Maria Poliacik's son John, and his wife Jean.⁷

One day in the summer of 1970 (at age 85!) Gramma decided that she again wanted to visit her sister Anna in Ohio (Anna's daughter Lillian tells this story). Gramma left John and Jean Poliacik's house, without telling them of her plans, went by bus to the institution where Martha was, which was not far away, walked out with Martha, and made her way from Somerville to Cleveland by bus. Her cousin Anna Miklovic was astonished when Gramma called her from the Greyhound bus terminal in Cleveland, asking to be picked up. Anna Miklovic's daughters Mildred and Therese drove Gramma and Martha out to Homerville, to Anna Czenkner's farm. Everyone was amazed by what Gramma had managed to do, and Gramma and Martha had a very good time. Lillian's husband Gene took time off from his job, and they and their children took Gramma and Martha back to New Jersey, making a short vacation of the trip.¹⁰

Gramma and Martha lived with John and Jean Poliacik and their family until Gramma died, in July of 1974.³⁴¹ The funeral service was in Somerville, and John and Jean took their minister with them and Martha to Greenville the next day, and their minister gave the burial service. Gramma was buried in Greenville Cemetery with Uncle Fred.⁷ Martha continued to live in the institution near John and Jean, and Jean did Martha's grocery shopping for her until Jean herself died in 1983.¹³ Martha died in April of 1987, at age 69, and she's buried in Greenville too, with Gramma and Uncle Fred.^{342,7}



John Poliacik Jr. and his wife Jean (right) and their children, David, Carol, Christine and Joseph, Aug. 2, 1951 at Frontier Days Celebration in Somerville, NJ.

We've finished up the story of Susan Tomko Hechko Kummer without digressing, as we did in the previous two chapters, to the stories of her sisters and her brother. Now, in the next few pages, we'll finish up those stories.

Maria Tomko Poliacik

John and Mary Poliacik owned a grand house at 437 East Main Street in Somerville, NJ, in 1930, and John had had a good job as a foundry molder at the Somerville Stove Manufacturing Company for about fifteen years by then. Shortly afterwards, though, early in the Great Depression era, the stove works folded, and John lost this good source of income. It was difficult to find work at this time. To help him out John Fann loaned him the money to start a small grocery store, but it didn't fare very well. (John Fann also helped John Jr. and Steve Poliacik work their way through college, finding summer jobs for them at the ice plant where he worked.) John Poliacik Sr. later worked at a number of odd jobs, some of them road work for the WPA (the federal Works Progress Administration, later called the Work Projects Administration), but he was never again able to get such a good job as the one he had at the stove works. Sometime in the 1940's John Sr. and Mary were no longer able to afford living in the home they cherished on Main Street, and so they had to sell it and move in with John Jr. and his wife Jean, not far away. John Sr. died in 1952, at about age 68.^{7,8}



Maria & John Poliacik.

Sometime around 1940 Mary Sr. and Mary Jr. together decided to stop using the name "Mary." Mary Sr. was from then on "Maria" (her original name), and Mary Jr. was "Marie."⁷

Steve Poliacik enlisted in the Navy in World War II. Because he had a college degree he became one of the "90-day wonders," those who were quickly promoted to officer rank. He put guns on Merchant Marine vessels, and he was in charge of a gun group that once fired on a submarine, from a distance, and missed.^{343,7}



Joe Poliacik, who joined the Merchant Marine in WWII and died at Leghorn, Italy, in Jan. 1945.

Joe Poliacik enlisted in the Merchant Marine in World War II. Tragedy struck the family on 15 January 1945 when the very personable Joe was killed in Leghorn (Livorno), Italy. Joe and another seaman on the Liberty ship Calvin Coolidge were killed while ashore. Leghorn at that time was the location of the Allied Forces Headquarters in the Mediterranean Theatre of World War II. Joe was buried in New Jersey.^{344,345}

John Jr. and Steve went to Princeton College and became schoolteachers. Steve went on to become the principal of a grade school, and John had a long career as a manual shop teacher at Somerville High School. John had his shop class build a full-size boat one year, something that wouldn't happen nowadays. He also had a shop out in back of his house, where he worked full-time after he retired from teaching. One of his jobs was to outfit a trailer for Gene Autry, "The Singing Cowboy," of radio, movie and television fame.^{7,8,10}

John Jr. and Jean raised a family of four children; Marie and her husband Henry Baer raised two sons; Steve and his wife Shirley raised three children; and Emily and her husband George Osterman raised two sons.⁷

Maria Tomko Poliacik died in October of 1980, at age 90.⁷

Anna Tomko Kobezda Czenkner

Louis and Anna Czenkner were still living at West 150th Street in Cleveland in June of 1933 when their daughter Lillian June was born. Louis's son Adolph was 14 at this time; Anna's daughter Helen was 15. After he finished high school Adolph enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps, in which he spent six months doing outdoor construction work in Montana. He fell in love with Montana, and went back there afterwards to work for a number of years at a radio station. Helen married Frank Augustine, whom she later divorced. Sometime afterwards she married Clarence Behrendt, and together they ran concession stands at Puritas Springs Amusement Park on the Westside of Cleveland for many years. Helen had two children by each marriage.¹⁰



Anna and Louis Czenkner in back, with Eleanore Kobezda in the middle. Helen and Frank Augustine in front, with daughter Joyce, Lillian Czenkner and "Teddy" (the dog), Easter 1938.

Around 1941 Louis and Anna bought a 24 acre farm in Valley City, Ohio, about 22 miles southwest of Cleveland. Louis continued working at the aluminum shop in Cleveland, at first, commuting by bus. (Louis never drove a car. His one and only attempt resulted in a crash into the chicken coop.) Anna worked at a school in Berea, cleaning for 50¢ an hour. In January of 1951 Louis and Anna bought a larger farm, an 89 acre farm in Homerville, 18 miles further southwest, where they started milking thirty cows. Louis's health was very bad by this time, and he couldn't work. Lillian did the farm work and Anna worked at the Hobnob restaurant in Lodi. Auntie Daniel stayed summers in both Valley City and Homerville. "She knitted, and made dumplings that made you feel so full!" The Tomko and Miklovic cousins in Cleveland too were frequent visitors.¹⁰



Anna Czenkner and daughter Anna (Kobezda) Ludrovsky, stringing beans.

Lillian worked on the farm and loved it, after graduating from high school in June of 1952. In October of 1956 she married Eugene ("Gene")

Reinke, a locomotive engineer-in-training for the B & O Railroad, who soon became a full-fledged engineer. They bought a house in Homerville and raised a family of two children. Louis Czenkner died in Lodi in December of 1961, at age 73. Gene Reinke died in August of 1971, of a heart attack at age 47.¹⁰

Anna's other Kobezda children grew up with her first husband, Steven Kobezda. Ben Kobezda had a band at one time, when he was young.⁷ He married Eleanore Oldes and they raised a son. Ben had a television-radio repair store in Berea for a long time, and he and Eleanore moved to a farm in Chatham (four miles from Homerville) in the 1950's. Anna Kobezda married Joseph Ludrovsky, who enlisted in the Army in January of 1944 for the duration of World War II, but was killed in late November of 1944 in France.^{346,347} He received a purple heart post-humously, and was buried in the American Cemetery at Epinal, France. Anna raised their daughter herself, and the two of them lived with her father. Steve Kobezda died in Cleveland in November of 1975, at age 93.¹⁰

Anna Tomko Kobezda Czenkner died in Homerville in February of 1974, at age 81. Anna and Louis are buried in Maple Hill Cemetery in Homerville.¹⁰



Joseph & Anna (Kobezda) Ludrovsky, ~1941.

Sophie Tomko Fann

Sophie and John Fano lived in Queens Village, Long Island, and John remained chief engineer at the Rubel Ice & Coal Plant there, for twenty years, up to 1949. In October of 1939 the whole family legally changed their family name to Fann. They had grown weary of being asked to explain their ancestral origin each time they mentioned their name. It was a relief to them afterwards when there were no more inquiries.⁷

In October of 1949 Mildred married Frank Schmidt, and they bought a home in a development just being built in Little Neck, Long Island, modelled on the famous Levittown development, twelve miles east, built two years earlier. Frank worked for the New York City Transit Authority, on the rotary machinery that powered the subway system, and eventually he became foreman of a substation. He and Mildred raised two daughters. When Mildred and Frank purchased a home in the new development at Little Neck, Sophie and John decided to do the same, purchasing a home around the corner from Mildred and Frank's. Sophie and John lived with Mildred and Frank for a short period while their own house was being built. And John got a new job at a marketing complex in the Bronx. For the first time in his life he commuted, by bus and subway. John served as an engineer there, at a place where goods brought in by ship



John and Sophie Fann, and granddaughter Millie Schmidt, 1951.

were distributed to markets.⁷

John D. Fann enlisted in the Naval Air Corps for three years in World War II, working as a mechanic and flight engineer. He'd hoped for an aviation job when he got out, but these jobs had all been taken by other men who'd been hoping the same thing. He ended up working at a bank on Wall Street, and this led to a career as a banker. In the early 1950's he moved to Burbank, California, where in January of 1956 he married June Schumacher. In January of 1979 Sophie and John

moved to a retirement home in Burbank, to be near John D. and June. John Fann died in Burbank in April of 1981, at age 87. Around 1985 John D. and June moved to Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, where their son Michael and his family were living. John D. moved Sophie into a nursing home nearby. Soon thereafter, though, Sophie lived with Lily Kong, a Hawaiian woman who cared for elderly ladies in her home.^{8,7}



Sophie & John Fann, their children & grandchildren. Front: Joan Schmidt. Back: Millie, Frank and Mildred Schmidt, and John & June Fann and their son Michael.

Sophie Tomko Fann died in Hawaii in August of 1993, twelve days short of age 99.⁷

Paul Tomko

In Australia, under the Aliens Act of 1947 (after World War II), Paul Tomko was required to obtain a Certificate of Registration from the Australian Department of Immigration. As an alien living in Australia he would be required to carry this certificate with him at all times, and to produce it upon demand. His registration application and his certificate tell us that he was living at 13 Howard St. in West Melbourne, Victoria, in February of 1948. He had been in Australia since February of 1928 (when he arrived at Sydney on the S.S. Grefeld), and he was still a citizen of Czechoslovakia. He was a toolmaker for PAEUR & Co. He was 5' 7½" in height and of medium build, with brown hair and brown eyes, and he had a scar on the right side of his nose. He was married, and his wife's name was Anna Tomko (who never left Štrba)⁸. Paul left Australia (with permission) in April of 1953, on the S.S. Oceania.³⁴⁸



Paul Tomko, in Australia in 1940.

So Paul returned to Štrba in 1953. Anna may have died before Paul's return (we know she died before Paul died), since there was a story that she had

hidden money in various places all over the house, and that this was discovered after her death.⁸ By the time Paul returned Czechoslovakia was under Communist control, and the government had taken possession of his house. Paul was very upset that he had to pay rent to live in his own house.⁸ We know nothing more about Paul except that he died in Štrba in October of 1971.³⁴⁹ We have no pictures of him from after 1948. Marie Baer, daughter of Maria Tomko Poliacik, went to Štrba soon after Paul's death to settle her uncle's estate on behalf of her mother and her mother's sisters. She met stiff resistance from the Communist government in power there at the time. They were very much opposed to allowing any money to leave the country. Marie persisted, however, and she was able to obtain about \$8,000 inheritance for each of Paul's four sisters.^{8,†}



Paul Tomko, 1948.

John D. Fann and his wife June visited Slovakia in 1994 (just after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, and the creation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which took effect 1 January 1993), and met some Tomko cousins who had inherited Paul's property. Paul's old house was still there, in back, but unoccupied. The cousins had built a new house on the property, in front of the old house.⁸

† We had hoped to talk to Maria Baer about her experience in Bratislava, and about Tomko family history in general, but she died on 25 July 2006, before we were able to get in touch with her.

Chapter 4

John Gurka and Susan Tomo, my father's parents

Ján (“John”) Gurka, my father’s father, was born in May of 1869 in Betlanovce, a village about six or seven miles southeast of the city of Poprad in the country now called Slovakia, which was then called Upper Hungary, and which was a part of the newly-formed (just two years old) Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁴⁰¹ We’ve heard that he was one of a pair of twins, and that the other died at birth.⁶ His father, Martin Gurka, a soldier, a private in “Legion Schmerling #67,” married his mother, Katarína Macsus, three weeks before Ján was born.[†] Martin was 26 years old and Katarína was 23 when they married; they were both Roman Catholic and they both lived in Spišská Nová Ves, a market town about eight miles east-south-east of Betlanovce.⁴⁰² Martin, and his Gurka ancestors for at least three generations before him as well, was born and raised in Smižany, a village (in an R.C. parish of the same name) about five miles east-south-east of Betlanovce (Betlanovce was in Hrabušice R.C. parish).⁴⁰³ We’ve heard that the Gurkas were horsemen—that they trained horses.⁵ Martin and Katarína had their home in Smižany when Ján was born, but Katarína went back to Betlanovce (the village in which she was born, and in which she grew up) to give birth, in house number 26. A year later they were living in Betlanovce, at house number 22, and this is where Martin died of “phzysis” (tuberculosis), in August of 1870 at age 27.⁴⁰⁵ Katarína died of tuberculosis too, five years later at age 30, in Betlanovce house number 25.^{406,*} Both she and Martin were buried in Betlanovce Cemetery. So Ján, an only child, was an orphan a month before he reached the age of six. We’ve been told that Ján was then brought up by two aunts, both schoolteachers, in Poprad.⁵ One of Ján’s descendants (his son Martin) used to wonder if the other twin had actually lived, and if he or she had been brought up by other relatives; however, if this were so then there would have been a record of his or her baptism in the Hrabušice R.C. parish register, next to that of Ján, and there is no such record.⁶ We’ve also heard that Ján had an “Uncle John,” perhaps a husband of one of his schoolteacher aunts, who went out to work in a field once, shortly after a thunderstorm had passed, when he was suddenly struck and killed by a



John and Susan Gurka, sometime in the 1910's.

† The one Hrabušice R.C. parish marriage register page that we possess, covering marriages over the period from Nov. 1868 to Sept. 1869, indicates that most of the men in the parish in their twenties and early thirties who married at this time were soldiers. Of the seventeen men listed on the page, thirteen could be considered eligible for military service. Of these thirteen, nine were soldiers; and of the nine, six were in Legion Schmerling #67.⁴⁰²

* In the 1869 Hungarian Census there was only one Macsus family living in Betlanovce—that of Johann Macsus and his wife Anna Raczvin, one of two families living in house number 25. Johann (Germanized “Jan”) was born in 1809 in Machalovce, a small village about three miles northeast of Betlanovce, and Anna was born in 1807 in Janovce, a small village a half-mile west of Machalovce. Living with them in 1869 was Maria Macsus, born in 1852 in Betlanovce. They were all Roman Catholic. Because house 25 was that in which Katarína died in 1875 it seems likely that Johann and Anna were her parents, and that Maria was her younger sister.⁴⁴⁹ (1869 census enumerations of Smižany, Spišská Nová Ves and Štrba do not seem to be available.)

bolt of lightning. Because of this, Ján grew up with great respect for lightning.⁶ And his own children too (who had been told this story many times) were always careful to seek shelter when there was a possibility of lightning striking.

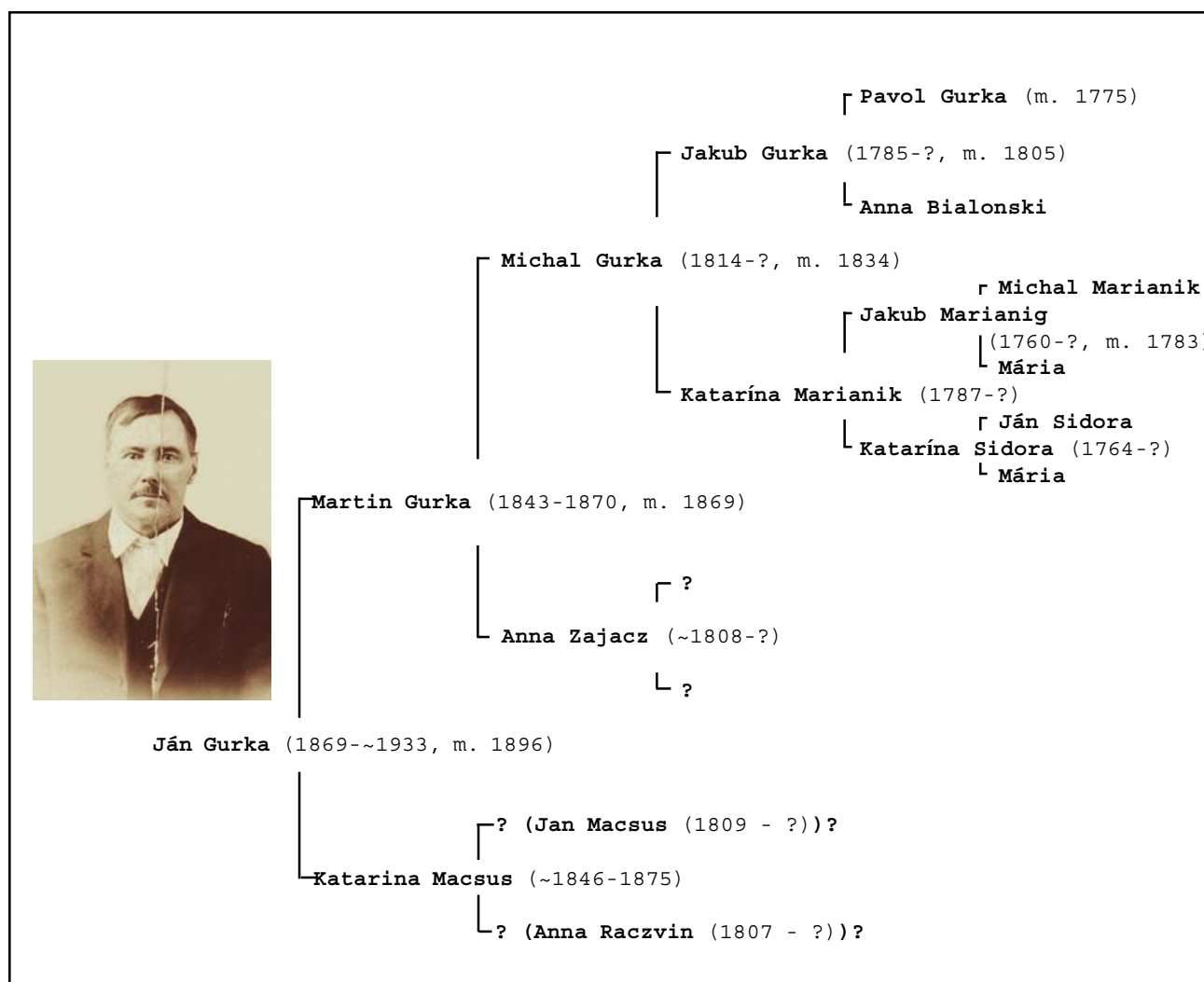
Zuzana (“Susanna”) Tomo, my father’s mother, was born in April of 1874 in the town of Štrba (pronounced “Shturba”), in present-day Slovakia, about ten miles west of Poprad. Zuzana was the daughter of Jan and Maria (Michalko) Tomo, farmers in Štrba. The Tomo and Michalko families had been in Štrba for many generations. Zuzana had a brother whose name we don’t know, who was born in 1871; a sister Maria, born in 1872; a sister Anna, born in 1876, and a brother Ján who was born in 1879 and died at age eighteen. She also had two brothers named Jan (the 1st) and Michal, who died four years before she was born, at ages four and two.⁴⁰⁷ We don’t know much about Zuzana’s family, except that her sister Maria married a Tomko.⁴⁰⁸ My other grandmother’s maiden name was Tomko (my two grandmothers, both of whom were born and raised in Štrba, were in fact distant cousins) but we don’t know how she was related to the Tomko that Maria Tomo married.

Zuzana Tomo and Ján Gurka both loved to dance, and they were good at it. They won dancing contests, and they were a popular, winning young couple.⁶ They wanted to marry, but Ján was Roman Catholic and Zuzana was Lutheran, and we’ve heard that this was a serious problem at that time and in that place. This kind of marriage just wasn’t allowed. But they persisted. We’ve heard that Ján made it clear that if they were not allowed to marry then they would run off to America, and get married there. And so it was permitted. It had never been permitted there before. The priest consented to marry the Catholic and the Lutheran under the stipulation that the sons be brought up Catholic, and the daughters Lutheran.⁶ As good as the story sounds, the record books bring up some questions. It may be that the priest at Ján’s Catholic church would not consent to marry them; but if so, it wasn’t he who relented, since they were married at the Lutheran church in Velka.^{409,†} (Vel’ká, or more simply “Velka”, was a village just outside Poprad at that time, to the northwest—it’s now a part of Poprad. The word “vel’ká” means “large” in Slovak.) There were actually three other such mixed marriages on the very same page of the marriage register on which Ján’s and Zuzana’s marriage was recorded, one of them a year before their own. Perhaps the actual story is that Ján’s aunts, or other relatives, and/or Zuzana’s family, were horrified at the idea of a Catholic/Lutheran marriage in their family, and perhaps it is that which had never happened before. Indeed, Ján Gurka’s ancestors were Roman Catholic as far back as we know, and Zuzana Tomo’s were Lutheran.⁴¹⁰

Ján was 26 years old and Zuzana was 21 in February of 1896, when they married, and they both had been living in Velka.⁴⁰⁹ They obtained a dispensation for a mixed marriage (swearing the required oaths) on the 13th of February, and were married on the 16th. Ján was a carter at the time, and Zuzana was a servant. Their first child was a son named Ján, who was born in Velka late the next month, and who died at age nineteen days.^{411,412} Daughter Zuzana was born on May Day (May 1st), 1898, in Velka.⁴¹³ Their next child was another son that they named Ján, born in September of 1901 in Velka.⁴¹⁴

If the family had indeed lived in Poprad for a while, then by April of 1902 they had moved back to Velka. At this time, at age 32, Ján decided to go to America. It was likely a plan to make ends meet, financially. It appears that he (along with many others) was responding to a campaign to recruit immigrant contract workers by an American company. Ján Gurka and Stefan Michlik (age 43) sailed on the steamship Cassel, arriving at New York in mid-April.⁴¹⁵ Both Ján and Stefan were farmers from “Felka” (the Hungar-

† It appears that the Hungarians had begun to make progress in their Magyarization of Slovakia (Upper Hungary) by 1896. The Velka Lutheran parish records were written in Hungarian at this time. All of the prior Slovakian parish records that we have obtained, both Catholic and Lutheran, were written in Latin.



The Gurka Family Tree

This tree was researched for us by the staff of the Slovakian National Archives in Levoča (Štátny archív v Levoči). The baptismal record for Ján Gurka, and the marriage and burial records for his parents, Martin Gurka and Katarína Macsus, may be found in the Catholic records for Hrabušice parish. The records upon which all of the rest of the tree is based are the Catholic records for Smižany parish.

Štátny archív v Levoči has explained that the Gurka and Marianik lines cannot be traced back any further because records do not exist from before 1744, and Pavol Gurka and Anna Bialonski were apparently born before 1744. The marriage record for Martin Gurka and Katarína Macsus shows that Katarína was 23 years old on 10 May 1869, and that her birthplace was “Betlenfalu” (Betlanovce); but a record of her baptism in the baptismal registers of Betlanovce (in Hrabušice parish) cannot be found. Thus the Archives was unable to trace her line back any further. Similarly, Anna Zajacz should have been born in Iliašovce (in Smižany parish) around 1808, but the parish baptismal records fail to prove this, and thus her line too cannot be traced back further. The names given above as good possibilities for the parents of Katarína Macsus are based on information from the 1869 Hungarian Census (see the footnote at the bottom of page 4-1).

ian name for Velka), and their destination was Coplay, Pennsylvania. The person they were going to join was T. Schwarz (perhaps a hiring agent), of Egypt, Pennsylvania (two miles northwest of Coplay). Coplay is a town in the Lehigh Valley, near Allentown and Bethlehem, and ten miles from the New Jersey state line. The Cement Mills of Coplay were at this time attracting immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, so it's likely that this is what drew Ján and Stefan there.⁴¹⁶ If so, then they would have worked in the production of portland cement.*

The Tomo Family Tree

That's my grandmother's (Zuzana Tomo Gurka's) family tree on the next page. We were lucky in that four complete generations of her ancestors can be found in the Štrba Catholic and Lutheran parish records. These records extend from the 1740's to the 1890's, so for that period, at least (and possibly much further back yet), nearly all my Tomo ancestors lived their entire lives in Štrba. They were pretty much all farmers, I imagine.

Jan and Maria (Michalko) Tomo, my grandmother's parents, had seven children that we know of:

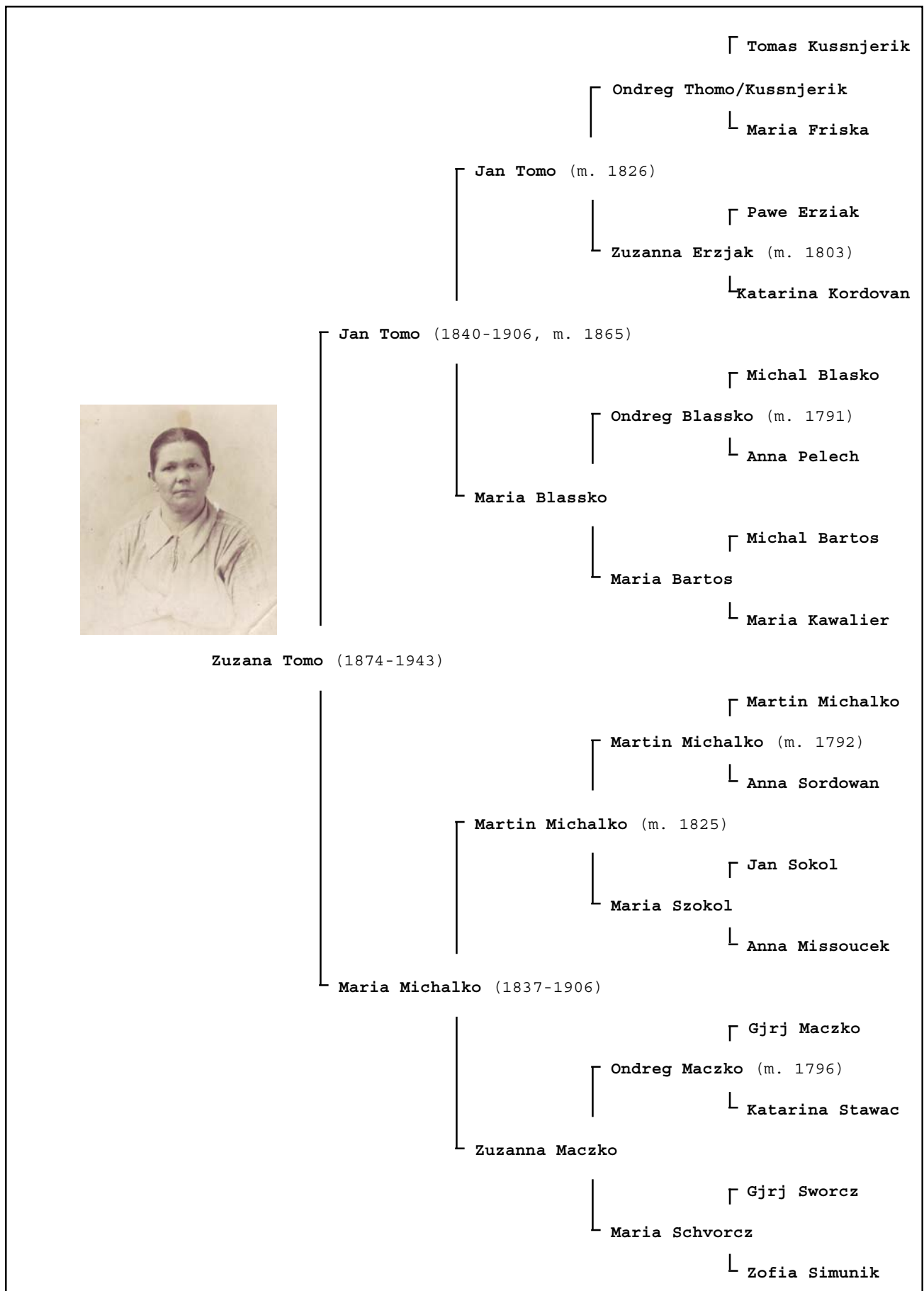
Jan, born 8 Nov. 1866, died 1870
Michal, born 7 Oct. 1868, died 1870
(a son), born 2 May 1871
Maria, born 2 May 1872
Zuzana, born 24th April 1874, died 26 Jan. 1943 (my grandmother)
Anna, born 6 April 1876
Jan, born 20 Feb. 1879, died 30 April 1897

It appears that my grandmother Gurka's parents had the same bad luck with the name "Jan" that my grandmother Gurka herself did. Jan and Zuzana (Tomo) Gurka had a son Jan who died at age 19 days, and a second son Jan who died in Sharon, Pennsylvania, at age 18.

Tomas Kussnjerik and Maria Friska, and Michal Bartos and Maria Kavalier, who were all great-great-grandparents of my grandmother Zuzana (Tomo) Gurka, were also great-great-great-grandparents of my other grandmother, Zuzana (Tomko) Hechko Kummer, who too was born and raised in Štrba. So my two grandmothers were (double) third cousins, once removed. In fact, they basically had the same last name, since "Tomko" and "Tomo" are variant spellings of a name meaning "of Tomas."

I suppose that my two grandmothers knew each other in Štrba. They went to the same Lutheran church. Zuzana Tomo was eleven years older than Zuzana Tomko, though. Even though they were related (as almost everyone in Štrba was), I imagine they both would have been hard-pressed to explain the relationship. You can read more about the Tomko/Tomo/Thomo/Kussnjerik part of their relationship in Appendix E.

This tree is based mainly on Lutheran Štrba parish records on microfilm at the Slovak National Archives in Bytča (Štátny archív v Bytči), searched for us by the Institute for Historical Family Research (IHFF Genealogie Gesellschaft mbH, Vienna, Austria; www.ihff.at). Some of the records (in the Jan Tomo line) were found for us by Štátny archív v Bytči directly.





Suzanna Gurka (John and Susan's daughter),
~1916.

We suppose that Ján (now “John” since he was in America) stayed in the Coplay area for a few years, but by early 1908 he had returned to Velka, for in November of 1908 his son Martin was born there.⁴¹⁸ Shortly after, in January of 1909, John again sailed to America, this time alone, to join “acquaintance” (probably hiring agent) Jacob Brees, of Egypt, Pennsylvania.⁴¹⁹ He had declared on the ship’s passenger manifest that he was a farm laborer from Velka. If he again worked in the Cement Mills it wasn’t for very long. In December of 1910 he was living in Johnstown, Pennsylvania—for that’s where his twelve-year-old daughter Zuzanna was heading at that time to join him.⁴²⁰ Zuzanna travelled with Anna Zmok, age 39, who was going to join her husband, Meklos Zmok, at “Horrok Str. 5, Johnstown, Pa.” (Horrocks Street, we presume), which was also John Gurka’s address. Meklos Zmok (as “Mihàly Zmok”) was a person who was a witness at John Gurka’s marriage in 1896, so presumably he was either a friend of long standing or a relative.⁴⁰⁹ The description of Zuzanna on the passenger list of the “Graf Waldersee” tells us that she was 5' 2" tall, with blond hair and brown eyes. Zuzanna and Anna arrived

in Baltimore on Christmas Day, but they probably had to wait there some time for John and/or Meklos to meet them, since the ship’s passenger manifest was marked “Pending” for the two of them. We’ve heard that John worked in the coal mines of Johnstown.⁵

Johnstown, Pennsylvania, famous for the “Johnstown Flood” of 1889, is about 65 miles east of Pittsburgh. The Cambria Iron Company, formed there in the 1850’s, was the leading steel producer in the country for many years. This is very likely the company for which John Gurka worked. Here’s an excerpt from a web magazine called “Westsylvania for Allegheny Travelers”:

* There was another Ján (John) Gurka living in Egypt, PA, at the time my grandfather lived and worked there. This John Gurka was born in Krig, Hungaria (present-day Vojňany, Slovakia), which is about 15 miles north-northeast of Poprad. He lived in Egypt, PA, from 1898 to 1910 and then returned to the farm in Krig, where he was still living in 1924. There was also an Andreg Gurka, also from Krig, who lived in Egypt, PA, from 1899 to 1907, and who returned to farming in Krig, where he died in 1917. These two Gurkas likely had also responded to the recruitment effort of the portland cement company in Egypt, PA. This information is from the U.S. passport applications of their sons, John (son of John) and Andreg (son of Andreg) Gurka, both of whom were born in Egypt, PA, in 1905. John Gurka Sr.’s wife’s name was Mary Yelenak. John Gurka Jr.’s godfather, Michael Galgon, another Slovakian immigrant, still worked as a laborer in Cementon, PA (about a mile and a half east of Egypt, and about the same distance north of Coplay), in 1924, at the Giant Portland Cement Company, which may be the cement company which recruited the Hungarian laborers.⁴¹⁷



Evelyn Yohman and Martin Gurka, ~1925.

“The first large-scale mining activity prior to the Civil War occurred in Johnstown when the newly formed Cambria Iron Company opened the Rolling Mill Mine in 1856. Extending into the Upper Kittanning “C” seam, this mine proved to be one of the greatest coal producers in Cambria County. Mine cars laden with coal passed through the original drift portal,[†] which was located above the Conemaugh River near the Inclined Plane, and delivered coal to the Cambria Iron Works via a company-built trestle. In addition to the Rolling Mill Mine, the Cambria Iron Company operated the Blast Furnace Mine at Prospect Hill above the iron works. In shallow pits along this hillside, Cambria Iron produced its first coke for use in its nearby blast furnaces. When the Rolling Mill Mine closed in 1931, it had yielded nearly 22.4 million tons of coal.”⁴²¹



Joseph Gurka, ~1925.

By 1910 the Cambria Iron Company was called the Cambria Steel Company, and it owned numerous coal mines in the Johnstown area and elsewhere. John Gurka lived within a mile of the Rolling Mill Mine, with its portal (entrance) just across the river from downtown Johnstown. There was a disastrous explosion there eight years previously, killing over 100 mineworkers, almost all of them Eastern European immigrant laborers. This paragraph from an article in *Collier's Weekly* concerning that disaster is of particular interest to us:

“For fifty years this Johnstown mine had been tunnelled and drifted and shafted. It is one of largest, best equipped mines in the country, with the most powerful fans in Pennsylvania. It yields 3,000 tons of coal daily. The miners earn sixty cents a ton, and many mine ten tons a day. The bulk of their earnings they save, while living in squalor; for this is the way of the Hun and the Slav and the Pole. As there are - or were - 600 of them, they were poor as a community while well-to-do individually.”⁴²²

John Gurka could easily have earned over three dollars a day, over ten times what he could have earned in Hungaria. Zuzanna may have attended school, or she may have started working immediately, to earn money to hasten the arrival of the rest of the family. John sent part of his earnings back to Velka, used some to support himself and his daughter, and saved whatever he could. He and his daughter were alone in Johnstown for over two years before his wife and the two boys arrived. In April of 1913 Zuzanna Sr. was

39 years old, Janos was eleven, and Marton was four. They came from “Poprad Felke” (Velka) and arrived at Baltimore.^{423,†} Zuzanna gave the name of her sister, Maria Tomko, of Csorba (Hungarian for Štrba), as that of her nearest relative in Hungary. They were joining John Gurka, of “250 Joliet Avenue, Midvill, Johnstown, Pa.” (probably Iolite Avenue, in Woodvale, the 11th Ward of Johnstown, less than a quarter mile from Horrocks Street). Zuzanna Sr. was 4' 11" tall. Now in America, the



Joe Gurka in Velka around 1932.

[†] The Rolling Mill Mine was a “drift mine,” meaning that you entered via a portal in the exposed coal seam in the steep cliff along the bank of the river, and you mined horizontally, for the most part, following the seam.



The Gurka house in Czechoslovakia, around 1930.



This shot gives a little better idea of the length of the house. (That's Joe Gurka.)

three became Susan Sr., John Jr. and Martin. Susan's name appears in several different forms in various records—we'll refer to her as "Susan" and to her daughter as "Suzanna," to distinguish between them.

By May of 1915, when son Joseph (my father) was born, the family had moved to Sharon, Pennsylvania, less than a mile from the Ohio border, about halfway between Pittsburgh and Lake Erie.⁴²⁶ Daughter Ethel was born in Sharon, too, in January of 1918.⁴²⁷ Sometime before Joseph was born Susan converted from the Lutheran Church to the Church of God. We know this because we've heard that she always had a special place in her heart for Joe, because he was born after she was converted.⁴²⁸ Susan probably was converted in Sharon, since there was a strong Slovak Church of God mission there. But there was also a Slovak Church of God mission in Johnstown.⁴²⁹ It's possible that she first heard of the Church of God in Velka, since an evangelist from Sharon named Jacob Luchansky went back to his homeland in 1896 or 1897 to preach and plant missions throughout a large region of Hungary and Slovakia.⁴³⁰ Once converted, Susan became devoted to the Church of God. She was to become a forceful missionary.



John Gurka, around 1930.

John Gurka Sr. was converted to the Church of God sometime later. It happened after he came home drunk one night, and Susan kicked him out in the snow with his friends. Their son Martin always liked to tell this story, of how his mother, a little woman, kicked her husband, a big man, out of the house in a fury. Susan wouldn't let John back in until he promised to give up drinking, and to go with her to the Church of God.⁶

In November of 1918 Suzanna married Joseph Yohman, a tailor in Sharon.⁴³¹ They were married by Reverend Jacob Luchansky at the Church of God in Sharon. Their story is told at length in Chapter

† Zuzanna, Janos and Marton Gurka's names can be found (crossed out) on two other 1913 ship manifests. These two ships arrived at the port of New York on April 11th and April 24th.^{424,425} The ship on which they actually sailed arrived in Baltimore on April 28th. It appears that there was a good deal of confusion involved in this journey.

5, so we won't tell much of it here. Joseph and Suzanna Yohman's daughter Evelyn was born in June of 1919, around which time both Suzanna and her brother John contracted tuberculosis.^{432,433}

In January of 1920, at the time of the federal census, the John Gurka family was living at 809 Ravine Place, in Sharon.⁴³⁴ Susan's name was given as "Suzie." She was 46 years old and John was 45, and the children, John, Martin, Joe and Ethel, were 18, 11, 5 and 2. The native language for John and Susan, and for John Jr. and Martin, was Slovak. All four could read and write (Joe and Ethel were too young, of course), and Martin was attending school. Along with John Sr. and John Jr., all the adult males on their street, and on the nearby streets as well, worked as laborers at a steel mill.[†] John and Susan owned their home. Joseph and "Susan" Yohman, and six-month-old Evelyn, were living less than a quarter-mile away, at 373 Mesabi Street, and they too owned their home.⁴³⁵

John and Susan Gurka were frugal—they saved a large portion of their earnings. Their home was a two-story house, and they rented a bedroom upstairs to three men at a time, men who worked at the steel mill on different shifts (they time-shared the room).⁵ Susan also prepared meals for the lodgers. But if the men came home drunk Susan wouldn't let them in the door. She kept them locked out until they sobered up.⁶

John Jr. died of his tuberculosis five months after the Census, in June of 1920, at age 19, in Sharon.⁴³² We've been told that he died of "black lung," from working in the coal mines.⁵ At the time of his death he was a carpenter.⁴³² He was John Sr.'s and Susan's second son of that name, and now both had died. They



A group of passengers aboard the S.S. Manhattan, which sailed from Hamburg to New York in June of 1933. That's Joe Gurka hanging on to the spar (see blow-up at top right).



Joseph Gurka, in 1933 at age 18 (passport photo).



Ethel Gurka, in 1934 at age 16 (passport photo).

felt that the name “John” was cursed for them.⁶ Suzanna died of her tuberculosis in 1922, at age 24, after three years of illness.⁴³³ Both John Jr. and Suzanna were buried in Sharon.

John Sr.’s health was not very good at this time either. He had difficulty breathing and he had started to limp, from rheumatism or arthritis.^{6,5} He and Susan finally decided to return to Slovakia (now, since the end of World War I, part of Czechoslovakia), because they felt that the mountain air would help his condition. In 1924 they sold their house and returned to Velka, taking Joe and Ethel with them, but leaving Martin with Slovakian friends of theirs in Sharon.⁵ At the time they left, everyone in the family, including Martin, had converted to the Church of God.⁶

Martin was about fifteen years old when his parents left Sharon; Joe was about nine and Ethel was about seven. Sometime before she left Sharon, Ethel had had a bad accident which left her crippled for life. She had been playing by the roadside, where there was construction work, and she fell into a hole, severely hurting her back. This accident caused her to stand hunched over from then on, and she remained sickly for the rest of her life.⁶

In Velka John and Susan bought a large house, and they rented rooms to ten families. They lived there on the rent income for the next ten years, and they formed a Church of God mission in their home.⁵ Martin visited them a number of times. After his family left Sharon Martin decided to become a Church of God minister, and he worked very hard to make this happen. He put himself through Findlay College, in Findlay, Ohio, in the early 1930’s, and he married Bertha Tobin in May of 1934, shortly

† John Gurka Sr. (and undoubtedly John Jr. too) worked at Sharon Steel.⁵ There were two steel companies in Sharon at this time (1920): “the North Works” (formerly the National Steel Company) and “the South Works” (Sharon Steel). Both were now part of Carnegie Steel, which in turn was part of U.S. Steel. The South Works plant was dismantled in 1921-1922, and the North Works in 1925-1926.⁴³⁶



Susan Gurka, in 1934 (passport photo).



Ethel and Susan Gurka, in 1935, at their house on 33rd St. in Manhattan. The writing is Evelyn Yohman Barger's.

before finishing his college courses. And he then began preaching. His story is told in more detail in Chapter 6.

John Gurka died in Velka in July of 1932.⁴³⁷ The cemetery in which he was buried has been moved since then to another location, to permit the building of a large hospital on the site.⁵

In June of 1933, at age 18, Joe Gurka returned to the U.S., on his own.⁴³⁸ He was in danger of being drafted into the Czechoslovakian army, and as an American citizen he (and his mother too, we presume) felt that it was high time for him to return to America.² On the ship's passenger manifest he gave as his U.S. address an address in New York City, so we assume that New York City is where he stayed for the next year and a half before his mother and Ethel came back to America. Joseph Gurka's story is told in Chapter 7, so we'll just touch on events that relate to the John and Susan Gurka story in this chapter.

Susan and Ethel left Velka in November of 1934, for fear that Nazi Germany would soon make war in Europe (as it did).⁵ Susan held on to the property in Velka and received rent income by mail.

Her Church of God mission there was still functioning when she left, and we've heard that it was still functioning over fifty years later, at which time the central downstairs part of the old house was used for church meeting, and the people there lived upstairs.⁵ Ethel came down with measles in Hamburg, Germany, on the way back to the U.S., and she and her mother were put in quarantine there.⁵ They finally arrived in New York City in early January of 1935, joining Martin and Bertha at 326 East 34th Street in Manhattan.⁴³⁹ The original address for Martin on the ship manifest was "Fredericktown, Ohio", so it appears that Susan may have become aware of Martin's new address sometime during their journey. Martin and Bertha, Joe, and Susan and Ethel then set up a Church of God mission in New York City, with Martin doing the preaching. Susan and Ethel lived on 33rd Street, and Susan bought another house in the Bronx which she rented out for \$30 per month. They lived on this rent income, plus the rent money from Velka, plus interest from savings.⁵

The Gurka family stayed in New York City until 1936, we're told, when Martin and Joe found work in Torrington, Connecticut.⁵ The whole family then moved to Torrington, into a home at 302 Litchfield Street. In Torrington they set up yet another Church of God mission, on the second floor above a store on Main Street, next door to City Hall.⁶ In August of 1937, at age 19, Ethel died from complications caused by her hunched back.⁴⁴⁰ She's buried in Hillside Cemetery in Torrington. In May of 1938 Joseph married Mildred Hechko, of New York City, at a Church of God in Jamaica, in the borough of Queens, New York City. Sometime in 1939 Susan's granddaughter Evelyn Yohman, who had recently finished



Susan Gurka (right) in 1935 at the Church of God mission in Manhattan. Ethel is probably behind her. Joe Zacker is on the left, and the name of the man in the middle is not known.

high school in Sharon, came to live with her in the house on Litchfield Street. And Martin and Joe both started building their own homes in 1939, and moved into them in 1940.

Susan Gurka remained in Torrington until 1942 when she married Jacob Luchansky, the Slovakian Church of God minister the family had known for so many years. He was a Slovak Church of God minister in Cleveland at this time (he had been there for over twenty years), and he was in Torrington visiting a friend or relative. (This relative was probably his son Joseph Luchansky, a name listed in a 1942 Torrington city directory.)¹⁵ It came as a surprise to Martin and Joe when their mother married Jacob Luchansky, and returned to Cleveland with him. We can find no record of the marriage in Torrington, so we presume that it took place in Cleveland. They lived at 9407 Dickens Road.⁴⁴¹ Jacob Luchansky's first wife, Dorothy, had died in March of 1930.⁴⁴² He and she had raised a family of ten children.⁴⁴³⁻⁴⁴⁵

Less than a year later, in January of 1943 at age 68, Susan Tomo Gurka Luchansky died in Cleveland of a heart attack while shovelling snow.^{441,5} Jacob Luchansky died in April of 1951, at age 84.⁴⁴⁶ They are both buried at Highland Park Cemetery in Cleveland.

Glad Tidings Tabernacle was a flagship Pentecostal church on West 33rd Street in New York City, founded by Robert A. and Marie (Burgess) Brown. It was a member of the Assemblies of God; it sent young people to missions efforts around the world; it supported a weekly radio broadcast; and it sponsored huge evangelistic rallies.^{447,448} Joe, Susan and Ethel Gurka (at right) were at the 28th Annual Convention in November of 1935.



Chapter 5

Suzanna Gurka, Joseph Yohman, and their daughter Evelyn Yohman

The early part of Suzanna Gurka's story has been told in Chapter 4, the John Gurka and Susana Tomo family story.

In November of 1918, at the age of twenty, Susanna married 23-year-old Joseph Yohman, of Sharon, the son of Jacob and Katalin (Bunk).[†] They were married at the Church of God in Sharon by the Reverend Jacob Luchansky.⁵⁰¹ Joseph Yohman was born with the name "Josef Jochmann" in May of 1895 in Illesfalu, Hungary (known today as Iliašovce, Slovakia).^{502,505 *} He had immigrated in June of 1913 at age eighteen. The year before his marriage he had been living in Cleveland, working as a laborer for the American Can Company.⁵⁰⁵ In Sharon he worked for a year or two at the Sharon Steel Mill.¹⁵ (John Gurka Sr. and John Gurka Jr. also worked there at about this time.) Susanna and Joseph's daughter Evelyn was born in June of 1919.¹⁵ By January of 1920 Joseph was a tailor in a tailor shop, and he and Susanna were living in a home that they owned (mortgaged) at 373 Mesabi Street.⁵⁰⁶ Suzanna's health was not good at this time. She had contracted tuberculosis in 1919, about the same time that her brother John did, and she died of it at age 24, in November of 1922, two years after John died. She was buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Sharon, where John was buried.⁵⁰⁷



Suzanna Gurka, c. 1918.

Suzanna Gurka's life was short, and there's no more story to tell, but we can tell that of her daughter. Evelyn was only four years younger than her uncle Joe Gurka (my father). And Evelyn knew much of the Gurka story, and she has passed this story on to us. And Evelyn had a Slovakian spirit, a spirit that was part of her to the day she died.

Joseph Yohman re-married around 1923, to Anna Povec (*pronounced "Povetz"*), who was a year younger than him.^{15,508} According to the 1930 federal census Anna too had immigrated from Czechoslovakia, in 1921. The native language for both Joseph and Anna was Slovak. Joseph was still a tailor in a tailor shop. By 1930 he and Anna had added two more children to their family: sons Daniel J., born around 1925, and Arthur P. ("Archie"), born around 1927. Evelyn was ten years old

[†] Jacob Jochmann was deceased at the time of his son's marriage, and Katalin ("Cathrin") lived in Farrell, a mile south of Sharon. Jacob had in fact died before July of 1913, when Kata Jochmann immigrated, and Kata's maiden surname was also spelled "Bong."⁵⁰¹⁻⁵⁰³

* The identification of Illesfalu (which has been spelled in a bewildering variety of ways) with present-day Iliašovce has been established most directly by a present-day regeneration of the birth certificate for Jakub Jochman (Jack Yohman), another son of Jacob and Katalin, obtained in February 2007 from the Republic of Slovakia.⁵⁰⁴ It gives "Iliašovce" as the birthplace. A 1913 ship's passenger list gives "Hlesfalva" (a spelling variant of Illesfalu).⁵⁰³ The regenerated birth certificate was obtained by Daniel Jochman, son of Helena Jochman (who presently lives in Iliašovce), and forwarded to us by Daniel's son Luboslav. These Jochmans are distant relatives of Arthur Barger, son of Evelyn Yohman Barger. Daniel and Luboslav are working on the Joseph Yohman family history, in addition to their own Jochman family history.

in 1930 and attending school. And the family was at that time living at 672 Spruce Street in Sharon.⁵⁰⁸

Evelyn left the Joseph Yohman household in Sharon soon after finishing high school, around 1939, when her grandmother Gurka told her of work in Torrington, Connecticut. She moved in with her grandmother and her uncle Martin and his family and her uncle Joe, at 302 Litchfield Street.¹⁵ (Evelyn's grandfather Gurka had died in Velka, Czechoslovakia, in 1932, and her aunt Ethel Gurka had died in Torrington in 1937.) Evelyn worked in Torrington as a housekeeper for the Dankin family, which owned a store downtown.¹⁵ Uncle Martin by this time had long ago left the Catholic Church and had become a Church of God minister, with a mission on Main Street, on the second floor of a building next to City Hall. Uncle Joseph and Uncle Martin had both bought property in Burrville, in the northern part of Torrington, early in 1939, and they were busy building their houses, intending to soon leave their mother's home. Joseph, who had married the year before, undoubtedly spent much of his time with his wife Mildred in New York City, where Mildred lived and worked until the house was finished. Grandmother Gurka, a devoted Church of God person, busied herself supporting Martin's mission.



Evelyn Yohman, c. 1937.

Sometime in 1942, we believe, Grandmother Gurka married Jacob Luchansky, the Slovakian Church of God minister who had joined in marriage Evelyn's parents in 1918.⁵ He had been visiting relatives in Torrington, and Grandmother Gurka went back with him to Cleveland. She died there in late January of 1943. The house on Litchfield Street would have been sold when Grandmother Gurka left, and Evelyn would have had to find accommodations elsewhere.



Evelyn and John Barger on their wedding day, 14 June 1947.

In June of 1947 Evelyn married John Barger, of Torrington, at the Calvary Baptist Church there.¹⁵ John was born in March of 1921 in Mengusovce, in present-day Slovakia (then part of Czechoslovakia). He had come to America in 1939 at the age of eighteen with his mother, his 15-year-old sister Susan and his 11-year-old brother Andy, to join his father in Torrington. John's sister Susan is the only one in the Barger family who was born in present-day Slovakia and who is also still with us today to tell us what it was like growing up there. Her story is of great interest to me (and to you, I hope!), first because it is interesting itself, but also because it would be similar in many respects to the stories of my ancestors who grew up in Štrba. So I'm going to put my family's story aside for a little while, and let Susan Barger tell her family's story.

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## **Zuzana Barger's Story ‡**

Our name was pronounced with a hard 'g' in Slovakia, like the 'g' in "target." My father was Jan Barger and my mother was Maria Meleky (as we would say here—it would be Maria Melekyová there). My name was Zuzana there. My brother Jan was born in March of 1921; I was born in March of 1924; and my brother Ondrej (pronounced "On-dray") was born in August of 1928. We lived in the village of Mengusovce, between Štrba and Poprad, three miles from Štrba and seven from Poprad. Mengusovce was smaller than the village of Štrba, and we considered Poprad a city. My father and my mother too were born in Mengusovce—he in 1893 and she in 1900. And my grandparents too were born there. I don't know beyond that, but I think our family went back for many generations there.

Before my father left, when I was little, I always wanted to be around him when he was working. This was during the winter months, when he worked inside. He would say, "Zuzanka, you come sit here and you tell me this, I need this and I need that, and you hand me this and you hand me that," and then we were singing. I still know today songs he taught me to sing. I was his helper while he fixed shoes, made winter boots, made furniture. He knew how to do everything you needed to do on a farm. He was very handy—a jack-of-all-trades. Most other men in the village were like that too.

My father left for America in July of 1929, at age 35.\* He was planning to be there just long enough to make the money to enable us to build a better house. Other men had gone to America before him and had found good work, and they were supporting their families back home. My brother Jan was eight years old when my father left; I was five and Ondrej was almost one. My father arrived in America just at the start of the Depression era, though, and it wasn't so easy for him to make money. First he paid back the person who had paid his shipfare, a farmer in East Litchfield who himself had had to borrow the money for this. My father paid him back by working on his farm. After that he lived with people he knew in Torrington, and he started working for the Torrington Company.† He sent back to us the money he made, holding back just enough to keep himself going.

We lived with grandfather Barger in the house that my father had grown up in. Grandfather was old, too old to do any hard work, and my mother took care of him. We all did. My grandmother Meleky and Uncle Jan Meleky and his family lived not far away, in the house that my mother had grown up in. Our house was a wood-frame house, old and dilapidated. I remember names inscribed



A portrait of his wife and children taken in Poprad in 1929 for Jan Barger to take with him to America. L to R: Maria, Ondrej, Jan and Zuzana.

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‡ We have written Susan (Barger) Kunay Zbell's story for her, based on interviews. We thank her for her time, her patience and her very welcome enthusiasm.

\* Jan Barger went to America to join cousin John Gaj, of Litchfield, Connecticut. He sailed with another person from Mengusovce, Josef Prebilinec, who was going to Pennsylvania.<sup>509</sup>

† In April of 1930 John Barger and two others were lodging with the Michael Sokol family at 25 Cottage Street. The three of them were laborers for a company that made ball bearings.<sup>510</sup>



The house in which Zuzana's mother grew up. In the 1930's when this picture was taken, it was the home of Zuzana's grandmother Meleky and her uncle Jan Meleky and his family.

on a wooden support beam overhead in the family room: "Jano Barger," and "Jano Dindofer." There was a "hlemais," a small storage building, in front of the house, between it and the road. We stored Sunday clothes and things we didn't need every day there, in the upper level, which you reached by ladder. Down below we stored our grain. Our house was of the old style. Years before, all the houses were similar to ours. But many people had built better houses by the 1930's, and they did without the hlemais—they put their storage area within the house. In back of our house was the chicken coop, built up high off the ground; so the chickens had to climb up to get in. And behind that was the shed where the

geese and pigs were kept. A small barn where the horses and cows (one or two of each) were put at night was about even with the pig sty, on the other side of the yard. And behind that was the "počop" (pronounced "puh-chup"), a shed where the "voz" (wagon) was stored. Our počop had an open front. We also had a little garden on the side of the house, or sometimes in back, and a well, way in back of the house.

You entered our house from the right side, through a door which led into a large family room. The door to the kitchen was on the right as you came in, and in the back of the house was another door which led into the kitchen from outside. There were no other rooms in the house besides the family room and the kitchen. My mother painted the inside walls white, and she kept everything bright and clean. The floor was wood. In the kitchen we had a huge tiled breadoven, with openings in the front where you put the bread. It was about eight feet by six feet, I would guess, and about three feet high. There was also a tiled cookstove which went from the floor to up near the roof. It had no chimney. We used the space above the kitchen as a smokehouse. That area was completely open to the kitchen, and slabs of meat hung from the rafters. There was a tall ladder that we used to climb up and cut off a slice of meat. The smoke from the cookstove went up into the smokehouse area and kept the meat smoked. The smoke lingered up there, and eventually escaped outside. We hung the meat up in the Fall, after the butchering. The meat had to go first into barrels of brine. Just about every house had a bread oven, but only some of the old houses had the smokehouse indoors, in the kitchen. Our house was good for working in, unlike most of the new houses.

In the family room too the ceiling was the underside of the roof. There was a small stove to heat the room. When it was cold outside we closed the kitchen door at night because the kitchen was drafty, and we stoked the fire in the stove just before we went to bed. The fire didn't last all night, though, and it could be very cold in the morning! We had a table in the family room, and many benches. We used benches against the walls to put stuff on, like clothes. There was a beautiful portrait on one wall of someone who had died in World War I. We had no cabinets, except perhaps a small one in which my father had his shoe-making tools. There was a big bed, on which my mother and I slept, and the boys when they were little. My father had built this bed, nice and sturdy and high. And there was my grandfather's small bed. When they were older the boys rolled out their

mattresses on the floor, wherever they liked. Our mattresses were of straw, enclosed in linen which my mother sewed shut. My mother changed the straw several times a year. When the straw was fresh those mattresses were wonderful!

We made our linen ourselves, as everyone in the village did. I made thread by hand, from flax. We didn't use a spinning wheel. It was a laborious process, involving many steps, and it was something we did in the winter. Like the other families in the village we had a loom (my grandfather made it long before), and we brought it out of storage and assembled it and set it up in the family room. It was large and had many parts. With it we made cloth for coats, underwear, mattress covers, and beautiful shirts, for all of which we sewed the pieces together by hand. Women got together to do this type of work. In the Spring we dismantled the loom and put it away.

Almost all the families in the village were farming families. Our farms weren't like farms in America, though. Our fields were strips of land, and each family had several of them, in different locations, in different directions from the village. Some were nearby and some (the hay fields in particular) were a couple of miles away, but our fields were not in our backyards. We grew wheat, rye and flax, mainly. The women and girls would carry lunch out to the men in the fields, sometimes walking miles to do it. There were little huts at the near ends of the hayfields, where you stored the hay when it was dry. In the wintertime, when you needed more, you drove out with the wagon and brought some back.

When we were little, if we children needed something badly enough, and there wasn't any money to buy it, we would sometimes run to Uncle Jan's house, and he would give us a crown. I also used to take a little cup up in the woods and pick fresh strawberries for the tourists, and settle for a crown. You couldn't do very much with one crown, but to me it was a lot. Some of the tourists' children I would see each year, and some became summer friends, and I would look forward to seeing them again. One summer friend, Zdenka, stayed at a house where there was a grandmother who didn't like me to visit, so Zdenka would come to my house. We Mengusovce children had chores to do, though, so we didn't have a lot of free time to play.

In Slovakia there were no restrictions against child labor. We worked from the time we started walking. We never complained about our duties—we were taught not to (and it wouldn't have done any good to complain). We were never asked, "Do you want to go to church?" It was always, "We're going." We learned to obey, and we never even thought about talking back. (You'd get one!)

I milked cows and helped to make butter, and I helped mother with all the chores around the house. When I was thirteen my mother felt I was old enough to



Maria Barger (right), Zuzana, Jan, little cousin Zuzana Gallová, and Ondrej, c. 1933. A picture taken of them by a summer tourist in the millyard across the road and stream from the Barger house (the one with the "hlemais" in front of it). In the background are the High Tatras.



Mengusovce school picture, 1934. The teacher and his wife are in the center.

take over the responsibility of going to the fair in Poprad once a week, to sell eggs, milk, buttermilk, butter, cottage cheese—whatever we had ready to sell. I put our market goods in a basket, wrapped it in a cloth and slung it over my shoulders. I walked two miles to a train station, took the train to the city, and then walked the best part of another mile to the fairground in the city. Not too many other women in Mengusovce went, but

of those who did I was the youngest. We stood in a line with women from other villages, out in the open with our baskets on the dirt at our feet, and people would come to buy our produce. Some women would try to take advantage of such a young girl as I was. They would try to haggle down the price, or demand a larger block of butter for the price of a smaller. But I stood up for myself and told them that if they didn't want to pay the price then they didn't have to buy from me. I would bring back to my mother the crowns I received, and she would use them to buy what she needed from the general store in our village.

The road in front of our house ran alongside a small stream, and across the stream from us was the town's gristmill. It was an old mill, and it milled flour for us (as it did for everyone else) from grists of grain that we took there to be milled. One person ran the mill, and that's all he did, but it kept him busy. You tell me that you have read that there is an 18th Century rustic treadmill in Mengusovce today, which was powered by a person or an animal walking a treadwheel.<sup>511</sup> I don't think our mill was powered that way. Electricity was being brought to Mengusovce in the 1930's. Maybe it was powered by that. We never had electricity in our house, but the mill was important, so maybe it got electricity first.

There were no cars in our village. Many people had horse buggies. We had a horse-drawn wagon. There was a person in Štrba who had a car, but his was the only one there. He was some sort of a chauffeur, and people admired his car. We had no refrigeration at all. For light after the sun went down we had candles, which we used sparingly. And if we needed to go anywhere in darkness, we took with us an oil lamp. We got water from the well way in the back. It was very deep, and enclosed, and you turned a crank which drew up a bucket. I preferred getting water from the stream, though, since it was easier. The stream came from the mountains, and the water was fresh and good.

The village hired a person to take the cows to pasture in the summer. He walked though the village in the morning blowing his horn, calling out the cows from each house. We let the cows out of their stalls, and they went out to the road and followed after him. He brought them back at the end of the day and they went back into their stalls. He also led them back in at noontime for milking, and back out an hour later. Another person took the horses to their pasture, at times when the horses

were not working. One of our horses was named “Caesar,” and he was a beautiful horse. He was not for riding, though. He was a workhorse.

Our school was a one-room schoolhouse. I had the same teacher all eight years. He was the only teacher, although his wife taught the girls to sew and embroider, and other such things. Our teacher produced plays based on folk tales which we school-children would stage. There would be a day when our teacher took the class up to the mountains, and we would have a picnic. He would cook a nice beef stew, with lots of vegetables. When it was cold we students took turns tending the stove to keep the classroom warm. When it was our family’s turn Jan and I had to bring wood, and go early to start the fire, and feed it during the day. Our turn lasted a week or two. You can see in our class picture how we dressed for school. Everyone in the village dressed like that when they weren’t working. If you were a married woman you had to put up your hair in the morning, and keep your head covered, as my mother had to do.



Butter-churners: Zuzana, Maria, Jan and Ondrej, c. 1937. (A picture given to them by a summer tourist.)

Our village was mostly Lutheran. There were Catholics too, but the Catholic Church seldom held services. When they did hold them, though, some of the Gypsies attended. And some of the Gypsies attended our Lutheran church. And some Gypsie children attended our school—those who wanted to learn (there were many). The Gypsies lived in a camp at one end of the town. They didn’t own much. I was afraid to go there. Sometimes parents would say, “Don’t go there—they can hurt you!” Those who worked for us seemed nice, though. They had good violin players! You couldn’t find them better than the Gypsies. The music they played would sometimes make you cry. They sang sometimes. They were good! We had good Gypsies!

Late on Sunday afternoons there’d be dancing down the street through the village. A few young people would start at one end of the village, and others would join in as they danced by. Some carried musical instruments—some harmonicas, mostly accordions. As a little girl I always got excited when I heard the music. My mother told me that when I was very little she would find me singing in my crib at five o’clock the next morning, singing a song I had heard the night before! The dancers would dance their way to the Village Hall, and dance there until dark. We danced polkas and waltzes and many other dances.

Grandfather Barger was in his 70’s in the 1930’s, so we had to hire others to help us work the farm. Gypsies would work on our farm for food, which was all we had to offer them. The Gypsies were very poor. We were poor, but they were poorer! Grandfather Barger died in 1937. On his deathbed he said to my mother, “Tell Jano it would be better if he could bring you to America. What do you have here? Nothing. A dilapidated house and . . . nothing!” After he died my mother started taking in lodgers for a month in the summer. These were tourists from Prague who liked to hike in the Tatras. While they stayed with us they had the family room and the large bed. My mother and my brothers and I slept in the kitchen, on top of the bread oven. If my mother had baked bread that

day, though, it was very warm up there! My mother made meals for the lodgers.

For meals my mother usually made soup. She would chop up a piece of meat (we ate little meat over there, not like over here), add onions and garlic, parsley, carrots, potatoes, barley, peas, beans, whatever we had. We didn't have deserts. For breakfast my mother would make a little hot cereal, and maybe some potato dumplings, "halusky".<sup>†</sup> My mother baked bread every two weeks, twelve round loaves, baked all at one time. Fresh from the oven the bread was wonderful! The tourists thought so too! If they wanted to buy a whole loaf, though, that presented a problem. Those twelve loaves were our bread for the next two weeks. When we were little my grandfather used to toast it for us, when we were all hungry and waiting for mother to finish milking the cows, which she did before dinner. He would hold the slices on a stick over the fire in the cookstove, through the door in the side. That toasted bread was so good!

On Christmas Eve each year, just as it was getting dark, the Gypsies would come through the village singing Christmas carols at each house, hoping for gifts. Sometimes they'd recite a poem having to do with Christmas. It was beautiful and nice. After supper we would go to church. Later on, around midnight, when we were in bed and asleep, we would be wakened by beautiful, beautiful music—Slovak Christmas carols sung by the young people from the belltowers in the village. It was heavenly to lay there listening to those angelic voices! On Christmas morning we would go to church again, and on Christmas day each family would stay at home, thinking about what Christmas is and what it means. Christmas day was solemn for us. The day after Christmas we would visit relatives and friends. Gifts were little things—we didn't have money. We baked kolače for visitors. And we had our Christmas tree. The boys chopped down the tree the day before Christmas, and we dressed it with Christmas balls that my father had sent from America, and candles. It was beautiful! Then some evening after Christmas young people would get together and have a party. I was just starting to get involved in this type of thing when we left Slovakia. It was so wonderful, and then I had to leave all of that, and all my good friends. I cried. Still, I thank my father for bringing us to America.

My father had to borrow money to bring us to America. We didn't leave until August of 1939, and we nearly left too late! Hitler was in power then and war was just about to break out, and it was difficult to leave the country. Jan was 18 years old when we left, I was 15, and Ondrej was just



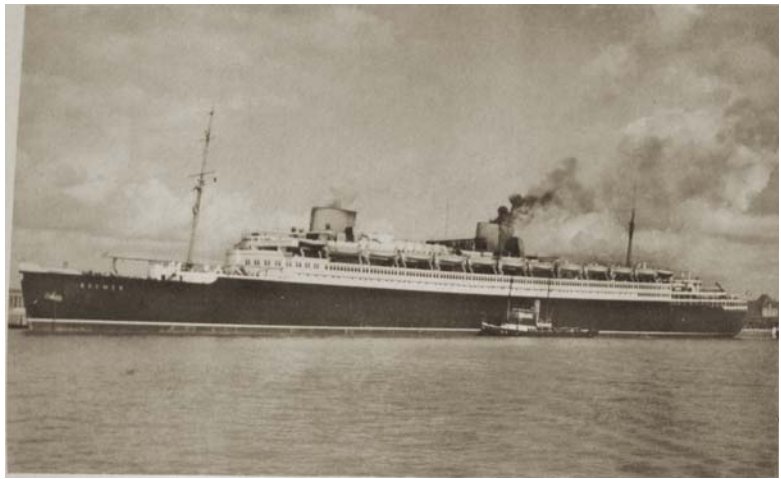
The group passport picture, taken in Poprad in 1939: Maria, Ondrej, Zuzana and Ján Barger.

turning 11. We had taken care of some of the preparations, including going to Poprad to get a group passport, and we were waiting for delivery of some papers that we needed before we could go. It was at that time that I first went to Bratislava, the largest city in Slovakia, 150 miles west of Mengusovce near the Austrian border. There was a celebration for youths taking place there and many youths from our village were going. My mother didn't want Jan and me to go since she was waiting for those papers to arrive. But Jan and I persisted, pleading that we would be gone only a couple days

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<sup>†</sup> My (Barbara's) grandmother Kummer made halusky for us. Halusky is a real treat!

(and nobody knew when the papers would come), and my mother gave in. Someone from the village had room for us in his horse buggy and off we went. Before we reached Bratislava the papers came! When we got to Bratislava we were found by someone whom Uncle Jan had telegraphed, and we were told to return immediately. We returned by train, and missed the celebration.



S.S. Bremen, the ocean liner that brought Maria Barger and her children to America in late August, 1939, just days before war was declared. (Ancestry.com)

When we got back, neighbors were helping my mother to prepare to leave. We left on August 7th by train, back to Bratislava, where my mother had to get papers signed. We took little baggage since our clothing was not right for America. We slept in the train station with many others who were leaving the country. The next day we went with my mother to get the papers signed. We waited many hours outside the building that she had gone into, in the hot sun. When she came out she found a place to buy grapes and bought us a bunch, a present on the occasion of Ondrej's birthday, which it was. They were so delicious! We had seldom had grapes before. Soon we left for Prague, again by train. My father had arranged a place there for us to stay. The mother of someone he knew in Torrington lived there, and we stayed with her for perhaps five days. Everywhere my mother went she was asked over and over again to explain why she had to leave the country, why she could not stay. From Prague we went by train to Bremen, where we waited again, until it was time to board the ship. We sailed away on August 22nd.<sup>512</sup>

"Bremen" was also the name of the ship. While we were crossing the ocean the captain got a radio message from Germany commanding him to turn back. The captain knew, though, that to go back to Germany would spell disaster (and doom!) for a large number of his 2000 passengers. He made a formal announcement to everyone on board: He told us what he had been commanded to do, and he told us that he had decided to continue on to America! May God bless him! Many people wept for joy!

*{ Adolf Ahrens, the captain of the Bremen, had decided to deliver his passengers to America and also to return to Germany. The Bremen and its sister ship, the Oceania, were luxury express liners, the top of the Norddeutscher Lloyd line and the pride of Germany. When these liners were built in 1929 they immediately set records as the fastest on the ocean, and they remained the fastest for several years. In 1939, at age 59, Captain Ahrens had 45 years (he began at age 14!) of maritime experience—the last eleven of them as a ship captain and the last three as captain of the Bremen. The Barger family was lucky to be on board the Bremen, and not the Oceania, which obeyed the command to return to port. On August 28th, after disembarking his passengers, Captain Ahrens wanted to depart New York immediately, without passengers. But the British had asked the Americans to hold the ship in harbor until they could get a cruiser in position to escort it back. (Britain wanted to capture the Bremen if war was suddenly declared, to use it as a high-speed troop transport, and to prevent the Germans from doing the same.) So the Bremen's departure was delayed as long as possible. Captain Ahrens took advantage of the delay, to give the Americans and the British*

*the impression that he would be heading south by ordering the Chief Pursor to purchase suntan oil, tropical clothing for the crew, and charts for the Caribbean and South America. When the Bremen was finally given permission to leave port, on the 30th, it indeed headed south. Two hundred miles out, under cover of blinding rain, Captain Ahrens ran with all the ship's lights lit for a short period, then extinguished them all and headed north at full speed. Two days later the Bremen removed all flags, and the captain had his crew paint the entire ship gray, while the ship was running at near-full speed (all of the German liners were carrying supplies of camouflage paint for just this eventuality). Captain Ahrens told the crew to paint or drown. He also had them take lifeboat training, and make preparations to scuttle the ship should it appear that capture was imminent. War was declared on September 2nd. The Bremen managed to slip through the British blockade and make its way to Murmansk, on the northern coast of Russia, with nearly no fuel left, on September 6th. (Russia had signed a non-aggression pact with Germany just the week before, so Murmansk was a safe port.) It was not until mid-October that the Bremen was discovered there. With a skeleton crew the Bremen reached its home port of Bremerhaven two months later by hugging the Norwegian coast and sailing in fog. It was sighted near the end of its journey by a British submarine, but the submarine declined to fire on the unarmed merchant vessel. Adolf Ahrens achieved fame for this daring venture. Peter Huchthausen's 2005 book "Shadow Voyage: The Extraordinary Wartime Escape of the Legendary SS Bremen," describes both the voyage to the U.S. and the escape. } <sup>513-517</sup>*

So we made it to America, thanks to the captain of the Bremen! And we were so happy to see Daddy again! And he to see us!

My father had been lodging with somebody before we arrived, but he soon bought a house there in Torrington for us to live in, borrowing the money for the down payment. John and Andy and I had to go to school to learn English. We had to start from the first grade! And John was 18! We were amazed at how complicated the English language is, at how many incomprehensible spellings we had to swallow whole. In Slovak everything is spelled as it sounds. We had no spelling there, no

spelling bees. Nevertheless, we were moved along through the classes quickly, and John and I finished in two years. I took high school equivalency tests and passed the second time. Andy finished school at the normal age. I started working after those two years in school, and each week I gave my whole paycheck to my father, until the time I got married.



The re-united Barger family in Torrington in 1942 when John Jr. was about to go in the Army. In the front are John Sr., newly-born Milan and Mary. In back are John Jr., Susan and Andy.

In November of 1941 the last member of our family, my baby brother Milan Paul, was born. Andy and Milan both went to college for a couple years right after they finished high school. They both went to work for the Torrington Company—Andy as a master machinist and Milan as an engineer. And they each married and raised a family. Andy raised four children and Milan two.

Since you've asked, I'll also tell you a little

of the story of my first husband, Edward Kunay, who grew up in Štrba, where your grandmothers grew up. Ed was born in Torrington in 1919. When he was a year and a half old his father, John Kunay, was called back to Štrba to help farm some land that his parents had just acquired. (Ed's mother, Sophie Macko, incidentally, was a best friend of Sophie Fann's.<sup>†</sup> In fact, the two of them lived together for a time in New York City before either was married.) Ed's father died around 1932 or so after a horse which he was shoeing kicked him in the stomach. At age 13 Ed was suddenly the man of the house, and his mother held him to it! When Ed was fourteen or fifteen years old he worked on the walkways up into the Tatras. He helped to build them. Before that people walked on paths through the woods. Ed helped to clear the trails of rocks, and to make them wider. He did this after the plowing and seeding in the Spring, and before the harvesting in the Fall, to earn extra money for his family while his two younger brothers took care of the farm. In 1937 when Ed was in danger of being drafted into the Czechoslovakian Army, his mother stood up and said, "No! He's an American citizen and he's going back to America!" (Sophie Kunay spent several days in jail because of her refusal to sign the papers allowing her son to enter the Army.) If Ed had gone into the Czechoslovakian Army he would have had to renounce his American citizenship, and his mother did not want him to do that. So Ed went back to Torrington. Even though Ed grew up in Štrba while I was growing up in Mengusovce, I didn't know him in Slovakia. I met him in Torrington.

Ed and I got married in May of 1947. We decided not to have children right away. We wanted to save our money so that we could buy a house before we started our family. The house we eventually bought was two houses away from the house that my brother John and his wife Evelyn bought, with a house on a corner in between. Our back yards connected, so we were next-door neighbors, in effect.

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We're now going back to the Evelyn Yohman story, but Susan Barger will still be a part of it. Evelyn's husband-to-be, John Barger, enlisted in the Army in January of 1943, for the duration of the war, plus six months.⁵¹⁸ He was on his way from Italy to Japan when peace was declared.¹⁴ Susan's husband-to-be, Ed Kunay, had enlisted in August of 1940, opting for the Coast Artillery Corps, and he spent five years at this in Boston.^{519,14} Evelyn's half-brother Archie Yohman enlisted in the Army in February of 1946, soon after he had turned 18. Archie was a draftsman at the time he enlisted, and he signed up for the Panama Canal Department.⁵²⁰ Four years later, at age 22, he was killed in a car accident.¹⁵ Evelyn's half-brother Daniel Yohman married Elizabeth ("Betty") Taylor some time in the 1940's, and they had two children, Daniel and



Joseph Yohman, left, and John Barger, right, at a Church of God camp in Hubbard, Ohio, in the 1950's.

[†] Sophie Tomko Fann was my (Barbara Gurka Clark's) grandmother Kummer's sister. Also, the family with which Ed Kunay stayed, after he came back to America in 1937, was the John Misura family, of Torrington—his cousins. John Misura was very likely the "Jan Misura" to whom grandmother Kummer was pretending to be married, in 1908 when her sisters Sophia and Anna arrived in America (see Chapter 1).



From center to right: John and Arthur Barger, Anna and Joseph Yohman, an unknown girl and Evelyn Barger. The four people on the left are not known.

Darlynn.¹⁵

And as we mentioned previously, Evelyn married John Barger in June of 1947. They too waited to have children. Their son Arthur was born in July of 1952. Four years later Evelyn wanted to adopt a baby girl, but to do so she first had to undergo blood tests. It was discovered that she had tuberculosis, and Evelyn was sent to a sanatorium in Newington, Connecticut, for a year of treatment. During that year Arthur stayed at Ed and Susan Kunay's house from Mondays to Fridays. Ed and Susan had a four-year-old son too, and they put Arthur in the room with him. John took Arthur back home (next-door) on weekends, and they visited Evelyn in Newington.¹⁴

Joseph Yohman remained a tailor his entire working life. He worked as the tailor for Garricks, a clothing store in Sharon; and he also had a home business. He made beautiful fur coats, fur hats, dresses for women, men's suits, etc. His wife (Evelyn's step-mother, Anna Povec Yohman) died at age 64, around 1960. Joseph Yohman later married a third time—Emma Bobby, who had a house in Farrell, Pennsylvania, near Sharon. Emma's son Walter Bobby lived with them, and Emma had a daughter Eleanor who lived in Hermitage, also near Sharon. Joseph Yohman's family was always a Church of God family. There was a Church of God in Sharon until some time in the late 1970's, at which time a new Church of God was built in Hubbard, Ohio, near Sharon but on the other side of the state line. There had long been a Church of God camp in Hubbard. Evelyn and her family often visited with her father and his family in Sharon, and they often spent part of their time at the camp in Hubbard, attending religious revivals. Joseph Yohman died in Sharon in June of 1983, at age 88. Emma died sometime before that.^{14,15,521}

Evelyn and John Barger visited Czechoslovakia in 1977. John wanted his sister Susan to go too, but Susan's husband Ed had died and she was seeking a job (which she needed), and she didn't want to be gone if and when a prospective employer called. Evelyn and John toured Prague and visited the homelands in Slovakia. Evelyn said that there was a school teacher in Poprad named Andrew Gurka, but they did not discover if he was a relative.⁵ In the summer of 1985 John dragged his again reluctant sister Susan to Czechoslovakia. Susan had just started a new job and was hesitant to take time off so soon, but she finally decided to go. She asked her employer, and he encouraged her to go, and told her that he would certainly hold her job for her. John and Susan visited Prague, and saw relatives in Bratislava and the area around Mengusovce. Susan tells that she could hardly believe her eyes when she saw how much Mengusovce had changed. They found nearly no relatives left there to tell their stories.⁵²²

John Barger died in July of 1990, in Torrington.⁵²³ His brother Andy died in January of 1998.⁵²⁴ And Evelyn Yohman Barger died in August of 2005, at age 86, in Torrington.¹⁵ They are all buried in Hillside Cemetery.

Chapter 6

Martin Gurka and Bertha Tobin

Martin Gurka was my uncle, my father's brother. When we were little we lived next door to Uncle Martin and Aunt Bertha, and their children (our cousins), David and Esther, who were a little older than us. The early part of Uncle Martin's story has been told in Chapter 4. In this chapter we're going to continue it from there. My cousin David was very interested in the Gurka family history. He collected information that we've incorporated in this book, and for that we owe him a lot of thanks. Unfortunately, David died in 1999, a year after our Gurka family reunion at my husband's and my cottage on Highland Lake, in Winsted, CT. I remember how excited he was to hear that others were also interested in the Gurka family history. If he were still alive today we would have asked him and Esther to tell the Martin Gurka family story together. Instead we have had to ask Esther to tell it alone. Before we let her begin, though, let me say that my father had a great deal of respect for his older brother Martin. Martin was all he had left of his family from about the time I was born. I think Uncle Martin was more than my father's brother—I think he was also his best friend.



Martin Gurka, ~1932.

Now I'm going to let Esther take over, and tell her family's story.[†] The italicized parts are material that we've added to it, based on records that we've found.

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My father liked to talk to me. He liked to talk about his folks, his values, his growing-up years—everything. And I loved to listen to him. He died almost forty years ago, when I was only 26 years old, but in those 26 years I heard many of his stories many times over.

I was born Esther Annetia Gurka; my brother was born David Irving Gurka. My brother was named after King David from the Bible, and I was named after Queen Esther. David was the older of the two of us; he was born in June of 1938 and I was born in November of 1940; and we both were born in Torrington, Connecticut. My father and mother had moved to Torrington in 1936. But let me start their story a little earlier than that.

You've already read about my father's early life, so I won't go back that far. I'll just mention first, though, that he was eleven years old in June of 1920 when his brother John, who was seven years older, died. And he had just turned 14 in November of 1922 when his sister Suzanna, ten years older, died. I'm sure these two events rocked my father's world. At age 14 he no longer had any older brothers or sisters, and he had become the oldest sibling to seven-year-old Joe and four-year-old Ethel. Now I'll begin his

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<sup>†</sup> We've written Esther Gurka Remsen's story for her, based on a number of interviews and visits with her. Some of the story is actually David Gurka's, based on a six-page Gurka Family manuscript that he wrote around 1994 or shortly thereafter.<sup>5</sup> We thank Esther for her generous cooperation, and for her time and patience, and we'd thank David if we could, for writing his manuscript.

story from the time his parents moved back to Velka, in Czechoslovakia, taking Joe and Ethel with them but letting my father stay in Sharon with Slovakian people that they knew. They returned to Velka in 1924, when my father was fifteen or sixteen years old.<sup>5</sup> This amazed me when I heard it from him, that such a young boy would be left on his own, but my father made it seem completely normal. My father told me he was not the good boy that his brother Joe was. My father was always in trouble—usually with his mother. He was in with a rowdy bunch of boys at this time—hellraisers who liked to sit in the back row at Church of God meetings and amuse themselves by making rude noises to disrupt the proceedings. And they would take off their smelly shoes and socks and push them under the chairs of the unfortunate elderly people in the row ahead. Perhaps all this had something to do with why he was left behind! (I’m just kidding.) I have to believe, though, that his mother went back to Velka with misgivings concerning her son’s welfare.

My father told me too that everyone in his family had been converted to the Church of God before his parents went back to Velka. And he also told me that he remained Catholic until he was sixteen years old. So we can conclude that he converted to the Church of God shortly before his parents left. He had been Catholic from birth, and he was an altarboy for a period. But he grew sick of the Catholic Church. He told me that the priest drank a lot, and that he lost respect for both him and the Church. I know it sounds as though he was not very serious while his mother was still in Sharon, but this changed in the year or so after she left. He decided to get serious. He decided to become a minister. He started attending youth camps, as many other Church of God youngsters did, but my father was more purposeful than most others his age.



Martin Gurka, “at Prof. (Ninn’s)? home, Carlisle, Pa. 1933.”



Camp cooks Martin Gurka (right) and his college room-mate and friend, Paul Boders, ~1932.

*In the mid-1920’s Slovak people in the Church of God in western Pennsylvania and Ohio decided to have an annual Slovak camp meeting. They purchased a five acre tract of woods near Hubbard, Ohio; erected a tabernacle and a lunch stand; and purchased some tents. The first meeting was held for three days around the Fourth of July, 1926. Thereafter, the annual meetings lasted one week, and they built dormitories and private cottages to house the participants. Martin Gurka saved a 1935 issue of a Church of God magazine for an article that described this effort and other early work of the Slovak people in the Church of God. The author of the article, Michael Fabry, was three years older than Martin and had grown up in Sharon, but had moved to Akron, Ohio, in 1920. Martin and Michael Fabry probably came to be good friends through the course of these camp meetings.<sup>601</sup>*

I don’t know too much about the years of my father’s life from the time his parents went back to Velka to the time he went to college. I assume that there were elders who were helping and guiding him in



Martin Gurka and a young friend,  
around 1933.

his efforts to become a Church of God minister. My mother told me he never went to high school, so he must have worked. He probably started working well before his parents left. My father told me he lived with the Zackers for several years (he talked about the Zackers a lot), so it was probably in Sharon that he lived with them. Joe Zacker was his very good friend. And at one time it was expected that my father would marry Mary Zacker, Joe's sister.

*By April of 1930, according to the federal census that year, Martin Gurka was living at 116 Peshine Avenue in Newark, lodging with Martin Kubis (a bottler in a medicine factory) and his family, and working as a laborer in a factory. Another household (of the six in the apartment building at that address) was that of Michael S. Metajka, a 54-year-old minister of a Slovak church. Martin's age was off (40 instead of 22), and his birthplace was wrong (Poland), but we still think it's him, because of the Slovak minister's presence there.<sup>602</sup> (Errors are commonplace in census records because the enumerators took the information from whom-ever they found home at the time.)*

My father was reluctant to speak Slovak in public. He always spoke English, except with family. He always spoke well, and his penmanship was truly marvelous. I think he worked hard in school. When my father decided to do something, he worked hard to do it. He worked hard to become a U.S. citizen.<sup>†</sup> And he was thereafter very proud of his U.S. citizenship. (He'd be very upset with you, and tell you off in no uncertain terms, if you said he wasn't an American!)

My father visited his parents in Czechoslovakia a number of times over the years he was apart from them. He told me that he liked to sail on freighters—the fare was less and the accommodations were first class, to his way of thinking. Between 1930 and 1932 my father spent some time serving in the Church of God mission in his parents' house in Velka, and elsewhere in Czechoslovakia too, I believe.<sup>604</sup> He took a camera with him one time and came back with a lot of glass slides which he used in college to show what was happening in Church of God missions in Slovakia.

*We have records of two of Martin's return voyages (on regular passenger liners). The first is from 1930, when it appears he spent a month or two of the summer in Velka. He was 21 years old at this time, a citizen of Czechoslovakia. He obtained his immigration visa in Washington, D.C. on June 20th, and on the voyage back in late August he sailed steerage (the least expensive fare). He declared his last permanent residence as New York, NY; but he was headed for "Home: 279 Bertland Avenue, Perth Amboy, NJ."*<sup>605</sup> *The second record is from two years later. By this time Martin was a U.S. citizen. He had been naturalized on 31 Oct. 1931 at the District Court of Toledo, OH. We assume he again spent a good part of the summer in Velka. He sailed home the first week in September, 1932, and his address in the U.S. was 114 North Main Street, Findley [sic], OH.*<sup>606</sup>

In 1931 my father started the "Three-year Ministerial Course" at Findlay College, the Church of God

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<sup>†</sup> Martin Gurka saved a clipping of a story that appeared in an Ohio newspaper describing how he, having no other means of transportation, had walked a great many miles to get his U.S. citizenship papers when he was attending college.<sup>603</sup> (Findlay is about 40 miles from Toledo.)



Martin Gurka and Joe Zacker, sometime in the 1930's.

college in Findlay, Ohio.<sup>604</sup> He had to pass an entrance exam to get in, and he got in on a scholarship newly offered to Slovakian students who wanted to become ministers. The scholarship didn't pay for everything, though. My father cleaned restaurants and worked however he could to earn the money to pay his way. The normal ministerial course was a four-year course, but my father wanted to get on with his life, to start preaching, so he pushed for a faster course. This course covered the same ground as the four-year course, so my father had to take extra classes and work harder than the other students. But my father was serious! He was on a mission and he wanted to get started!

He completed the required academic work in mid-June of 1934.<sup>607</sup> Three months before that, though (on March 12th), he was granted a license to preach for five months and 17 days.<sup>608</sup> This was probably connected with the course, and this is probably what resulted in his arrival soon thereafter (sometime in March or April) at a Church of God mission in Fredericktown, Ohio, where he came to serve for a period as the youth minister, under Reverend Emmett Wilson. He took notice of the pretty piano player right

away, and after a whirlwind courtship he married her, on May 23rd, 1934.<sup>609</sup> So that's how my father met and wooed my mother, Bertha Esther Tobin. It was Reverend Wilson who married them.

My mother was a daughter of Monroe and Laura (Zolman) Tobin. She was born in Mansfield, Ohio, twenty miles north of Fredericktown, in September of 1912. She had three younger sisters and one younger brother, and three older half-brothers since her father had been married once before. Her family was a farming family in Knox county. Her father and her mother too grew up in farming families in Ohio. My grandfather Tobin died before I was born.<sup>5</sup>

*In 1930 Charles M. and Laura E. Tobin were living on a rented farm (\$15/month) on Mission Chapel Road in Morris Township, Knox County, Ohio. At that time Monroe and Laura were both 47, Bertha was 17, Anna was 15, Phillip was 13, Ada was 11, and Ethlyn was 7. Laura's mother, Anna Zolman, 78, was living there at the farm, too. Everyone in the household was born in Ohio, and everyone's parents were born in Ohio as well. Charles was a laborer on the farm (he ran it). All the children except Bertha were attending school. And Bertha was working as a clerk in a novelty store.<sup>610</sup>*

After college my father, accompanied by my mother, travelled throughout the Midwest as an evangelist. As in other churches, ministers of Church of God missions invited young evangelists to come and preach, to get them started as preachers. He travelled through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.<sup>5</sup>

My father's father died in Velka in 1932. I think my father



Martin and Bertha Gurka in 1934, just after they were married.

wanted his folks to come back to America after that. Uncle Joe came back in June of 1933. He was an American citizen by birth since he was born in Sharon, so it wasn't too difficult for him to come back. To bring his mother and Ethel back my father had to sponsor them, guaranteeing to provide for them.<sup>†</sup> They didn't start back until late in 1934. When they arrived in New York in January of 1935 my father and mother were already there.\* Uncle Joe Gurka was in New York City, too. And my father's friends, the Zackers, were there. Together they all set up a new Church of God mission in the middle of Manhattan. My father was the minister, of course. The services were given in English, not Slovak, although many of the church-goers were Slovakian immigrants, or of Slovakian descent. Perhaps the idea of planting a new mission in New York City was my father's—perhaps he used the idea to bring his mother back from Slovakia. Or it might have been Gramma Gurka's own idea, or even Uncle Joe's! (In other words, we don't know why he chose New York City.) Gramma and Ethel settled in an apartment not far away from the church, and Gramma bought and rented out a house in the Bronx, for income.<sup>5</sup> My mother was an integral part of my father's church at this time—not just the piano player.

My father's work in New York was called "reserve mission work," and he did this for two years.<sup>604</sup> In 1936 he and Uncle Joe heard that they could get good jobs in Torrington, Connecticut, and they both needed the money. With Gramma Gurka and Ethel they all moved to Torrington and rented a house at 302 Litchfield Street. The Zackers too moved to Torrington. And the family set up another Church of God mission in downtown Torrington, on the second floor over a store on Main Street, next door to the City Hall. My father was ordained as a minister of the Church of God in 1937, in Providence, Rhode Island. Ethel died in Torrington in August of that year at the age of 19, from complications caused by her hunched back.<sup>5</sup> And my cousin Evelyn Yohman, from Sharon, came to stay with Gramma Gurka sometime in 1939.

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† On 28 May 1934 Martin Gurka had notarized a petition to the U.S. Consul General to issue Susanna Gurka an immigration visa for the U.S., upon the presentation by her of her passport. This petition was associated with a prepaid passenger liner ticket. The petition mentions that Rev. Martin Gurka was 25 years old; that he was naturalized on 29 Oct. 1931 (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Western Div., at Toledo, OH); that Naturalization Certificate No. 3471235, Petition No. 3564, was issued to him; that he was the Pastor of the Church of God at Fredericktown, OH; that he resided at 59 South Main St.; and that his income as pastor was about \$1200 per year. Martin was required to agree and guarantee that he would properly receive and provide for his mother, and to agree and guarantee that she would never become a charge upon the U.S.A. The petition stated, "That the said Susanna Gurka" . . . "is in no way connected with any secret organization whose aims are to overthrow organized government," . . . "but that she is a lady of good moral character, and that she is well able to read and write the Slovak language."<sup>611</sup> Susanna's passport was issued on 7 Sept. in Prague.<sup>612</sup> Ethel, like Joe, was an American citizen by birth, so it was simpler for Martin in her case. Instruction to grant a passport and visa for Ethel had been received from the U.S. Dept. of Labor's Immigration and Naturalization Service by the Consul General in Prague on 8 Nov., and Ethel obtained these at the Consulate General in Prague on 21 Dec.<sup>613</sup> (There was a lot involved in bringing relatives to America!)

\* Susanna Gurka declared for the ship manifest that she and her daughter Ethel were joining her son Martin Gurka at 326 E 34th St, NYC. She had originally given Martin's address as Fredericktown, OH, but that typed address was crossed out and the new address penned in.<sup>612</sup>



Martin Gurka in front of his Church of God mission in Manhattan, ~1935.



Joe Gurka, an unknown person, Joe Zacker and Martin Gurka, in front of Martin's Church of God mission in Manhattan, ~1935.

My father bought property in Burrville, in the northern part of Torrington township, in April of 1939, next to property which Uncle Joe had bought just a couple months before.<sup>614</sup> And my father started building a house. Uncle Joe was doing the same—he had married the year before, and he and his wife were getting ready to raise a family. My parents' family was already underway—my brother David was born in June of 1938, and I came in November of 1940, as I've mentioned.

Gramma Gurka left Torrington around 1942, before I was old enough to have any real memory of her. She married Jacob Luchansky, a Slovak Church of God minister whom the family had known from their days in Sharon, Pennsylvania. She moved to Cleveland with him, and she died a year later.<sup>5</sup> I believe my grand-

mother must have made a will in which she left money to my father and Uncle Joe. I know that my father hired an attorney in Cleveland to collect money from Luchansky, because I have a letter that the attorney sent to my father.<sup>615</sup> The attorney told my father that, after an examination of the records, he found that Luchansky had quit-claimed his Cleveland property to a woman in St. Louis (his daughter, the attorney suspected), and that he had placed a mortgage for \$4000 on it at the same time. The attorney believed that Luchansky was trying to place his property beyond the reach of creditors, and that the collection of money from him would be difficult, and would require a lot of litigation. My father and Uncle Joe were never able to get their inheritance. Whenever Uncle Joe and my father talked about Jacob Luchansky after that, they spoke in Slovak, in heated voices. I don't know what they were saying, but I know they weren't singing his praises! Why their mother had chosen to marry the man was a mystery to them from the start. But that a man would choose not to honor his wife's will was unforgivable, to my father. He lost all his respect for Jacob Luchansky. More than that, though, my father had put his heart and soul into his work for the Slovak Church of God, and Jacob Luchansky was basically its founder. It was not easy to depress my father's spirits, but this did it. He had lost more than his mother. He had lost what she believed in.

I remember my father's Church of God mission in Torrington, just barely. There were a lot of people there—Slovakian people. My cousin Evelyn was one. I remember running up and down the stairs and all over the place as a little girl, and my mother swatting me and telling me to sit. Sometime around 1943 or 1944 McMann's bought the building. Their department store took over both floors, and that was the end of the Slovak Church of God mission in Torrington. My brother David told me that my father sometimes went out to Ohio to preach, going by bus and taking David with him. So he must have done this around the time he closed the mission, or maybe shortly thereafter. Whoever invited him out paid the bus fare both ways for my father and David. After this my father stopped preaching for a while.

Our address in Burrville was 2712 Toringford West Street. My father built his house there from scratch, adding on to it from time to time when he could afford to do it. He didn't make much money. We were poor. We raised chickens in the back. David and I, and our cousins (Uncle Joe's four children), went to school at a little schoolhouse a half-mile down the road. It was a one-room schoolhouse when I was in first grade. By second grade it had been divided into two rooms. There were some tough kids there, and David and I would sometimes get beat up. We didn't tell our parents, though, because that

would have made matters worse for us. Our cousins had to deal with this too, but they told their mother, and she reacted violently to the bullies. And this aggravated the bullying for them.

My happiest memories of Burrville were the years when we lived next door to my cousins, before they moved away. All six of us used to always get together and play in the woods. I have a lot of good memories. Our mothers didn't get along well, but we kids did.



Martin Gurka's house on Tarringford West St., Burrville, in early development, around 1940.

My father was strict with David and me. He'd give us strappings if he felt we deserved them, but he never really hurt us—just a couple quick swats and we would bawl for show. My father was a pussycat, really. I bugged him all the time, hanging on his leg as he walked.

Uncle Joe often stopped by to visit with my father. When they had something serious to discuss, they'd talk in Slovak. My mother's ears would prick up when they did this. After they finished, she'd say, "I caught a lot of words!" My father often spoke Slovak with my cousin Evelyn, too.

We visited my mother's folks in Ohio a lot. One time my father stopped off in Sharon and showed us the neighborhood he grew up in, and the house where he had lived. It was a white house on a corner, with two floors and a nice little white porch. He pointed out the room in which his brother had died, on the second floor. He sat there for a long time, looking at the house, remembering.

In the 1940's and early 1950's my father was very active in youth work. By this time he was involved with American Church of God ministries (one in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in particular). He was no longer involved with Slovak missions. Around 1947 he founded the New England Church of God Youth Camp, in Pittsfield, on Pontoosuc Lake. Many ministers were involved, and a lot of kids came, from Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut and New York, mainly. They built a big tabernacle for the kids, and

they had retreats there. The ministers usually congregated there around Memorial Day. The camp was probably open from Memorial Day to Labor Day. My father would go up weekends, and he and my mother would spend their vacations there, helping out. And David and I went to camp there for two weeks every summer. David always loved it. I didn't like it at first, but I grew to like it well enough later. There was boating, swimming and baseball, and singing songs around a campfire at night—a lot of religious songs, and some crazy songs. It was a nice clean experience for church kids. William Boyd, who played Hopalong Cassidy in the



Judy, Esther, Dave and Jim Gurka, in front of the chicken coops at Martin's house on Tarringford West St., 1944.

movies (and on television in the 1950's), lived near there—we used to walk by his house. The camp soon grew too large for the site on Pontoosuc Lake. Around 1951 it was moved to a much larger site at Roaring Brook in Conway, Massachusetts.

My father stayed involved in the camp at Conway until about 1959. At that time a lot of the ministers in the Northeastern Council, mainly those from the New York City area, wanted the camp to provide homes for them near the campsite—permanent places to which they could retreat. There was a lot of land, and they wanted some of it. My father was very upset about this. He considered it unreligious, and he didn't want to have any part in it. He left the council of Northeastern ministers and he soon became more involved with Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania ministers. He and my mother met Pastor J. B. Wood and his wife Gail some time before this, when the two came to preach as evangelists, and they all became good friends, and stayed good friends. Pastor Wood and his wife had a church in Falls Church, Virginia, for many years after that.



Martin & Esther, Bertha, and David, at Balance Rock, near Martin's Church of God youth camp on Lake Pontoosuc in Pittsfield, Mass., ~1949.

Around 1946 my mother conned my father into starting a dry-cleaning business in Torrington. They called it D&M Cleaners (for David & Martin, but David was just eight years old at the time, and of course he was never a part of it). They did very well for three years. My mother did the bookwork, and operated the cleaning and pressing equipment with Dad's help, when he wasn't out delivering and picking up clothes. Once they got started they hired a driver to do most of the pick-up and delivery. Around 1948, though, my father was in a bad accident. He was out in the truck up on Newfield Road, delivering clothes on a very bad winter night. A man came down the hill in his car and tried to brake when he saw the truck, but he was going too fast and he hit some ice, and he collided so hard with my father's truck that it went

airborn. My father landed high up on a snow-bank, suffering a concussion and a lot of broken bones. He was taken by ambulance to the hospital, and he was there a long time. The truck was demolished, and my mother was not able to continue the business on her own, so she went and got a job at the Torrington Company. She didn't even have a car at first. When the workers went on strike in 1948 my mother was already working there, and she was out picketing with them. When my father finally got out of the hospital he and my mother sold the dry-cleaning business and rented out the building in the back separately. The accident destroyed their business and nearly bankrupted them. My father said, "Well, God doesn't want me to do that!"



The Martin Gurka family enrolling as Soldiers in the Salvation Army, in Winsted, CT, 1952. L to R: David, Martin & Esther, Bertha, the head of the Salvation Army in Winsted (name not known), and Lt. Col. David D. Coy.



Martin Gurka, ~1957, in front of his Church of God church in Clayton, Mass. (Martin made the sign himself.)

When my father was well enough to start working again, he too went out and got a job. He was in and out of jobs for the next few years. There was a recession at that time, in the early '50's after the Korean War, which made things difficult for him. I think his first job was at the Torrington Screw Company, where he got to be foreman of a shift. He worked twelve hour shifts (there was no overtime then), made about \$18 a week (which wasn't much even then), and finally decided that that job was not worthwhile. His next job (I think) was at Boots Foundry, where he poured steel into molds. Here he had another bad accident. They were pouring steel and something happened, and a stream of molten steel went through his boot. He had a hole in his foot and was laid up all winter. They had to graft skin. He ended up with a job as a night guard at Hayden Manufacturing Company, in Thomaston, where they made Timex watches. My mother more or less supported us until he got that job. She left her job at the Torrington Company then and she too got a job at Hayden's. It was soon after that that my father started preaching again.

My father had been out of preaching for ten years, but I don't mean to say that he didn't preach at all. Sometime in the late 1940's or early '50's he got involved in the Salvation Army in Winsted, about four miles or so north of Burrville. He and the leader there became friends, and my father preached there a lot. We went to worship service on Sundays there for several years. But eventually my father grew unhappy with it. He began to feel that he was missing his calling. He wanted a church of his own again.

In 1954 my father learned of an old empty church up in Clayton, Massachusetts. My parents had good friends up in Canaan, Connecticut, just across the state line from Clayton, and my father probably learned of it from them. He and my mother went up there one day to look at this church, and they parked and walked up the driveway. A woman came out of a little house in back of the church and asked why they were there. My father said they were just looking at the church and he asked if anybody used it. She told them that it wasn't being used, and that she'd been praying for someone to come and take it off her hands. It had been a Seventh-day Adventist church most recently, but it was a very old church. The woman told my father that she'd give him the church free of charge. This was a godsend for my father, but he wanted to start with a solid legal foundation. A Mason friend (my father was a member of the Connecticut Freemasons) recommended a lawyer in Pittsfield who was also a district attorney for the state of Massachusetts. So my father hired this person to take care of the legalities, and the church was his!

The church was (and is today) a small country church, built in the 1800's (and it had the gas lights



Martin preaching in Clayton in the 1950's.

from back then). It's still Church of God, and my husband Dick and I go there occasionally. It's all wood inside and it has the original pews. The people there are friendly. People that my father knew from Pittsfield and Stockton came down on Sundays for years to help him build up his congregation. The Church of God ministers in the Northeast used to come and we'd have youth conventions, with hayrides for the kids, ice-skating on the pond in back—it was a lot of fun. My father didn't make a lot of money there, but he was happy. My mother was the piano player, and she also taught Sunday school.



Esther, Bertha and David, at the time of Martin's funeral in 1967.

We were still living in Burrville when my father started that church, and we drove up there on Sundays. It wasn't until 1963 that my parents sold the Burrville house and moved up to Canaan, not far from the church.<sup>616</sup>

David worked for the Torrington Company all his working life. He married Deanna Emprimo around 1957, and they lived in Goshen for a while. They later moved up to Sheffield, Massachusetts, near Deanna's folks and not far from Clayton. And in 1974 they moved to Georgia. David took a transfer to a Torrington Company plant down there and got a very good promotion. I married Richard Remsen in 1959, the year after I graduated from high school, and we lived in Willimantic, where Dick worked for the Rogers Corporation.

My father preached in Clayton every Sunday for thirteen years, almost to the day he died. He died in June of 1967 at age 58, at home in Canaan. Rev. Emerson Wilson, the son of the minister who married my parents, came from Newark, Ohio, at my mother's request to perform the funeral and burial services. And Reverend and Mrs. Wood came up from Virginia. Mrs. Wood served as organist, and the two of them sang hymns. (The last time my father preached was shortly before he died, at Reverend Wood's church in Falls Church.) My father was buried in Clayton Cemetery, next to his church.

Before my father died, while he was ill, my mother went back to work at the Torrington Company. She continued to work there after Dad died, riding down and back in David's carpool. She also got ordained as a minister in the state of Massachusetts, and she took over the congregation in Clayton. She was ordained in her own church. She was the minister there from the time my father died until about 1970, when Harold and Hilma North took over. (Harold was the minister from then until he died, in 2002.)

A couple years after she stopped preaching my mother was invited down to Fredericksburg, Virginia, to be a professor at a college that was forming there. She moved to Fredericksburg in 1973, but the plans for the college fell through. She stayed there, though, and she died there in January of 2002. She's buried next to my father in Clayton.

## Chapter 7

### Joseph John Gurka and Mildred Suzanne Hechko, my parents

My sister Judy and my brothers Jim and Bob have helped me to narrate this story. So the voice of the narrator below is not always me—sometimes they’re speaking for me. We did it this way to make the story easier to read.<sup>†</sup>

The early part of my father’s story has been told in Chapter 4, and a little more has been told in Chapter 6, from the perspective of his brother Martin’s family. Now we’re going to shift to my father’s perspective, and to mine, and we’ll continue from Chapter 4, backtracking a little bit for a smoother start. The early part of my mother’s story has been told in Chapters 1 and 2 (in Chapter 2 she met and married my father), and we’ll shift perspective and backtrack some for her too. But, we’ll start with my father.

My father, Joseph John Gurka, was born in Sharon, Pennsylvania in May of 1915. He was about nine years old when his parents took him back to Velka. His sister Ethel was about six then, and partly crippled. My father’s brother John, fourteen years older, died when my father was five. His sister Suzanna, seventeen years older, married when he was three and a half, and died when he was seven and a half. So my father would have known neither his brother John nor his sister Suzanna very well, but he was old enough to remember them a little. Martin was six and a half years older, and about fifteen years old when he and my father were separated for about nine years. For those nine years in Velka, though, the family was my father, his parents, and Ethel, with occasional visits by Martin.

My father finished about three years of school in Sharon, Pennsylvania. He may have known a little Slovak when he was taken to Velka (from living in a Slovak family, and in a Slovak community), but he probably had to catch up a good bit. Ethel would have started her schooling in Velka, so she learned Slovak from the beginning. My father would have finished the eight grades of grammar school around 1929. He may also have finished four years of high school in Velka, or Poprad. It wouldn’t have taken long before he was thoroughly Czechoslovakian (Slovakian, actually). He may have remembered how to

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<sup>†</sup> This chapter is based to a large degree on interviews of, and visits with, my sister Judith Gurka Bensch and my brothers James and Robert Gurka. We thank them a lot for their help. You’ll find their individual contributions referenced (“1” is Judy, “2” is Jim, “3” is Bob). To firm up the dates and details we’ve supplemented the recollections with information found in various records.



Mildred Hechko and Joseph Gurka in 1936.



Joseph Gurka, sometime in 1936 at Mildred Hechko’s mother’s farm in New Baltimore, Greene County, New York.

speak English, but he didn't speak it there.

The house in which they lived in Velka was very long. The Gurka family lived on income derived from renting out rooms there to ten families. Perhaps this style of living influenced my father years later, when he decided to build a motel.

My grandfather Gurka was not healthy during these years. He may have lived longer in the mountain air of Velka than he would have lived in Sharon, Pennsylvania, but he died in Velka in 1932, at age 63. My father was seventeen years old at that time, and he came back to America the following year. He would later tell us that he left Czechoslovakia because he would have been drafted into the Czech army if he had stayed. He considered himself an American living in Czechoslovakia, and he said he felt that it was high time for him to get back to America.<sup>2</sup> He sailed in June of 1933, declaring for the ship passenger manifest that his address in the U.S. was 1778 Vyre Avenue, New York City.<sup>701</sup> There doesn't seem to be anything similar to "Vyre Avenue" on present-day New York City maps, so we don't know where this was. Presumably he knew someone who lived at this address, and presumably he remained in New York City for the next several years. In January of 1935 his mother and Ethel arrived. Martin and his wife Bertha had moved to New York City shortly before that. My father was surely involved (as the rest of his family was involved) in the Church of God, but to what degree we don't know. We think he stayed involved as long as his mother was still alive (she would have been very upset with him if he left the Church). In 1936 my father met and started courting my mother. This is obvious from the large number of early pictures of them together that we have—all dated 1936.



Joe Gurka, 1936.

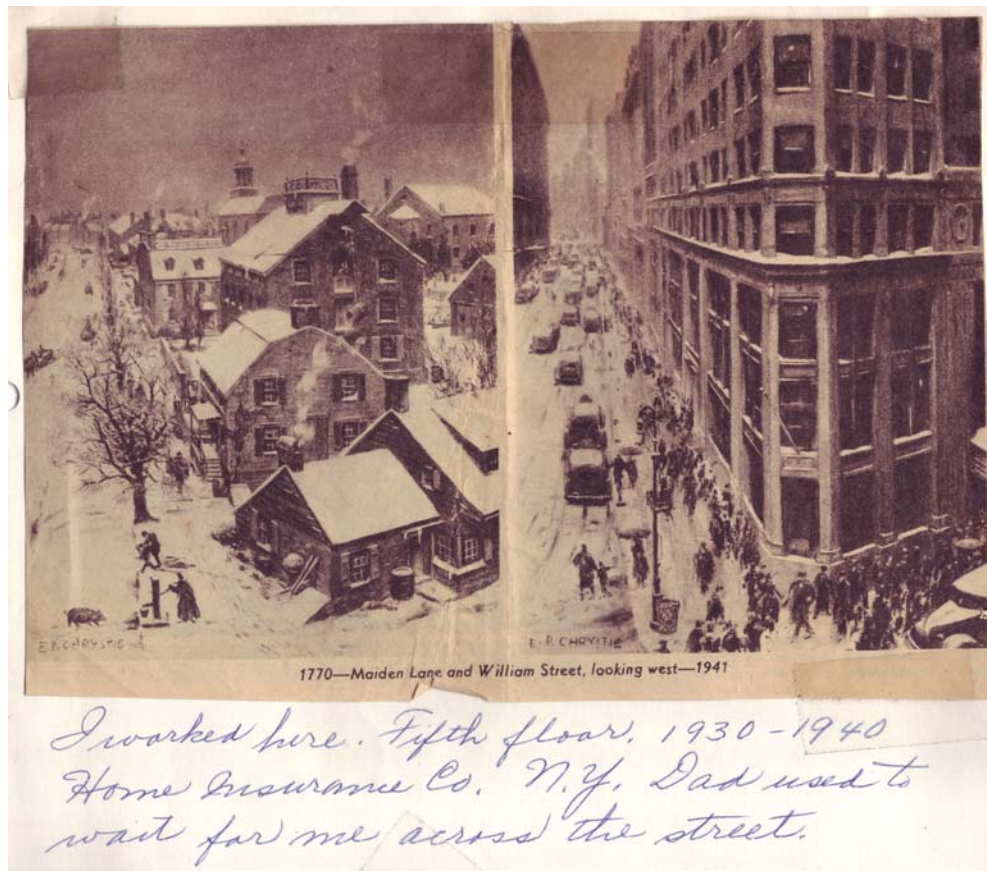
My mother, Mildred Susan Hechko, was born in Manhattan in November of 1910. So she was

about 25 years old when they met, and he was about 21. My mother was working at this time for the Home Insurance Company in a 14-story office building at 59 Maiden Lane, in the financial district of lower Manhattan. She had started working there in 1930, when she was about 19, and she continued working there until 1940.<sup>702</sup> She was either a secretary or a typist, and she typed very fast. Her mother and her younger sister Martha had been living in Greene County, New York (in the Catskills), since 1933; so she may have been on her own in New York City when she met my father. She was living at 203 West 85th Street in November of 1936.<sup>703</sup> My father always called my mother "Milka" in letters, notes and cards to her.<sup>1</sup>



Mildred Hechko in New York City, 1936.

My father used to tell a story of the beginning of his courtship of my mother. He and she had just walked out of a building, and he noticed a fairly dilapidated car on the street. He decided to walk her up to it and test her reaction. He opened the door for her, and she stepped in with no reluctance at all. He knew then that he had a keeper.



Joe Gurka in 1936, when he used to wait for Mildred across the street from where she worked. Mildred clipped the pictures at left from a newspaper story showing how New York had changed over the years.

They were married in May of 1938 at the Church of God in Jamaica, Queens Borough, New York City.<sup>704</sup> We've heard that my father and his brother Martin found work in Torrington, Connecticut, in 1936.<sup>5</sup> If this is true then my father and my mother would have been apart for much of the next four years. During that period my father would have lived at 302 Litchfield Street with his mother and Ethel, and probably Uncle Martin and Aunt Bertha too. All of them moved to Torrington in 1936, we've heard, and Ethel died there in 1937. And Grandmother Gurka re-married in 1942 and moved to Cleveland with her new husband, and she died there in 1943.

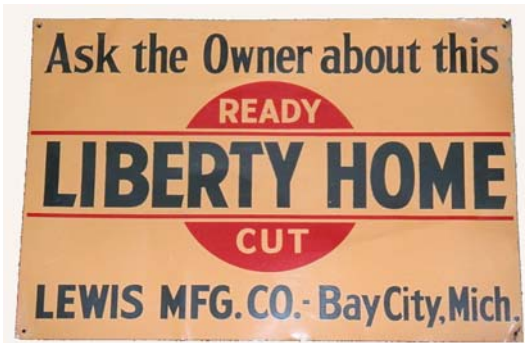
If my father moved to Torrington in 1936 then it was very late in the year that he did so. In mid-November of 1936, when he applied for a Social Security number, he was living at 326 East 34th Street in NYC, and working at B. Altman & Co., an upper class department store occupying a city block between Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue, and 34th and 35th Streets, kitty-corner to the Empire State Building (which was just five years old at this time).<sup>705,706</sup> We don't know what he did, exactly, at B. Altman & Co. So my father worked about three miles uptown from where my mother worked. The address at which my father was living at this time was the same address to which his mother and sister were going when they arrived from Czechoslovakia in January of 1935, to join Martin.<sup>707</sup> We assume that my father lived there with Martin and Bertha in 1935 and 1936, while his mother and Ethel lived nearby on 33rd Street.

My father built the house to which he brought my mother in 1940. They purchased the property for it in January of 1939—three acres at what was to become 2734 Tarringford West Street, in the Burrville district of Torrington, about five miles north of the center of town.<sup>708</sup> In October of that year they sold a three-year mortgage on their property to the Lewis Manufacturing Company, of Bay

City, Michigan, for \$898.20 to pay for a Lewis Manufacturing Company mail-order Ready-Cut Liberty Home.<sup>709</sup> The house my parents chose from the Liberty Home catalog was a low-cost bungalow, the most popular and the most affordable house at that time. From what I understand, the house kit would have arrived in Torrington by train in a boxcar or two, and it would have come in about

### **Joseph Gurka's Mail Order Home**

In 2000 my son Rick showed me an ad for a home that he and his wife Lisa were thinking of buying. Studying the picture it struck me that this was a house I knew. "Hold it!" I said, interrupting Rick, who was telling others about the house, "This house looks familiar! ... This looks like the house I grew up in!" And it was! The home which they then bought was the one my father built in 1940, at 2734 Torrington West Street in Torrington, Connecticut. My father purchased it mail order. It arrived in a boxcar or two, I've been told, in a lot of pieces. The main pieces were numbered, and my father followed the directions and put our house together. We lived in it for years, until we moved to Maryland.



Rick found this sign inside a wall when he was making modifications.



Dad inscribed this in the cement of the cellar floor, at the foot of the steps.



On the garage floor, just inside the side door, he sank wire forming his initials.



The house my dad built, around 1946, with my mother and us kids on the lawn.



The house today, 2006---Rick and Lisa's house, with Lisa and the kids on the lawn.



Joe & kids, ~1946. Bob & Barb in wheelbarrow, and Jim & Judy.

30,000 pieces, including building plans, precut lumber, windows, doors, plumbing fixtures, roofing shingles, paint, and a lot of nails!<sup>710</sup> Uncle Martin and Aunt Bertha Gurka built their home next-door, up the hill from ours with a short stretch of woods in-between. Uncle Martin's house wasn't built from a kit, though. He and my father built their houses at the same time.

For as far back as we know, my father worked at the American Brass Mill, in Torrington. He was a machinist. He operated a lathe, mainly, we think.

My sister Judith Ann and my brother James Joseph were born in November of 1941. They're twins. I'm Barbara Aline, and my brother Robert John and I were born in January of 1944. We're twins too.

My father was always upbeat, a happy-go-lucky kind of guy. He was also a dreamer and a nature-loving kind of guy. And he loved to build houses. That Liberty Home was his first—he built several more. He liked to build in fairly rural, woodsy areas, and he liked to build next to brooks. He liked to build his homes himself, partly to save money, but mostly because he liked to do it. He used contractors only when he had to. He was always dreaming up a new scheme, to make life better for us. Some of his schemes fell through, and of course he was disappointed, but it wouldn't be long before he'd be scheming again. He was also strict with us, and we feared the strap. We tried to be good, but sometimes we slipped up, and it was painful. Judy and I were always very good—it was the boys who slipped up more.<sup>1,2</sup>

Sometime around 1943 my father quit-claimed his interest in the property on Tarringford West Street to my mother, for some reason.<sup>711</sup> Thereafter, almost all the property transactions were put in her name. We don't really know why.

In August of 1945 my mother purchased property on the west side of Winsted Road, at the corner of Buttrick Road, about a mile (as the crow flies) southwest of our house.<sup>712</sup> At this time my father probably worked at Rosenbeck Bearing Company, which was adjacent to this property on the north, toward Winsted.<sup>2</sup> He was a machinist there. My father built a duplex house on this property, and he and my mother rented it out to two families at a time. There was a swampy area on the south side of the lot, fed by a spring, and my father had this dug out,



Mildred with Barb (left) and Judy, ~1947.

and he built a concrete dam to make a little pond there. It was always much too cold to swim in, though. Nevertheless, my mother was worried that we might go in, so she told us the pond was 100 feet deep, to scare that idea out of our heads. Buttrick Road was a dirt road which went up a little ways towards the mountain in back. My father planned to build a new house for us up there, at the base of the mountain; but he only got as far as laying the foundation before he abandoned the idea (perhaps because he had decided to move us all to Maryland). My parents sold this property in February and March of 1951, in two parts.<sup>713,714</sup> The people who bought the part in back built a house on my father's foundation.



Gurka children: Joseph's (the four on the left) and Martin's: (L to R) Barbara, Bob, Judy, Jim, Esther and Dave, around 1948 on West Tarringford Street.

In November of 1945 my mother purchased another piece of property, on the east side of Winsted Road, a mile south of the duplex.<sup>715</sup> There was an old Texaco gas station there, with a pump and a 550 gallon tank. The previous owner reserved the right to remove the pump and the tank before April of 1946. There were also two Tydol pumps and a tank there which were the property of Standard Cycle and Auto Supply Company. My parents converted this old gas station to an ice cream bar, which they called the Milk Bar. You can tell that my father poured a part of the concrete slab in front of the building, because it's dyed red.<sup>2</sup> This was something my father liked to do. The plan was that my mother would run this restaurant while my father worked at his machinist job, and when he got off work he would help. Jim and Judy remember that the tables came in, and they think my parents had it open for a little while. But my mother finally told my father that she just couldn't run a restaurant and take care of four little children at the same time.<sup>1</sup> My father also heard that a new highway was being planned which would take just about all the traffic away from Winsted Road.<sup>2</sup> So the Milk Bar never really got going the way my father had hoped. My mother sold it in June of 1949.<sup>716</sup>



Here we are again in the same order fifty years later, at our Gurka reunion at Highland Lake, Winsted, CT, in 1998.

My father and Uncle Martin also had the large house in Czechoslovakia, which they had inherited. They must have had someone there who took care of renting out the rooms. We don't know when they sold this.

We four kids went to school in a little red two-room schoolhouse in Burrville, a half mile down the hill, on Greenwood Road. Our cousins David and Esther, Uncle Martin's and Aunt Bertha's children, went there too, of course. Esther was a year ahead of Judy and Jim, and David was two years ahead of Esther. Bob had to drag me to school at the beginning. I tended to stop and sit in the middle of the road.<sup>3</sup> I remember learning to do cartwheels in the little yard beside the schoolhouse,



Joe and kids (Barb & Judy, Jim & Bob) ~1949.

and Jim remembers his first fight, in first grade, in the woods in back of the schoolhouse. He got creamed.<sup>2</sup> We four played a lot with David and Esther, in our yards and in the woods around our houses. We had a lot of fun together.

Judy recalls my father always working hard—constantly hammering. When he mowed the lawn he'd have us walk in front to pick up any stones. We always had a beautiful plush lawn. As we grew older the boys helped Dad a lot, hammering all the time. My father

had a playful side too. He liked to get on one of our bikes and ride all around the lawn, and then he'd head off down the road and disappear for a while, and we waited for him to come back. In winter he'd take us up the road to where the hill was steep, and he'd give us rides one-by-one on our sled. He'd lay on his stomach and we'd sit on top of his back, and off we'd go! In our back yard he'd make a snow ramp up against the back stone wall (that he'd made), so we could sled on our own. He also made ice skating rinks for us. In the summer he'd call out, "It's swimming time!" We'd all run and grab our towels and our big inner tubes, and jump in the back of his truck, and he and Mom and all of us would head for Highland Lake. Dad would jump in the water with us and pick us up and throw us. We loved it. Mom was always taking us swimming when Dad was at work. She'd sit on the beach and watch us play.<sup>1</sup>

Bob recalls how he loved playing in the back yard and going in the chicken coop. We had a big old fat pig which scared us, which we eventually ate. Bob recalls how he used to climb the plum tree and eat nice juicy plums, and then get hollered at by Dad. We had a black cocker/spitz who was always having puppies. One time she had six puppies under the breezeway floor. Bob went under and pulled them out and found three dead. Mom told him to bury them in the back yard, so he did—with their heads sticking out above ground! When Mom asked him why he did that he explained that it was so they could breathe. He was about five years old and didn't understand death.<sup>3</sup>

There were hard times, but we had the basics—simple things, all we needed. We had a tree swing out back. And Jim was always getting us together for a game of baseball. And Judy and I had our dolls. She and I will never forget the two beautiful dolls laid out on a table in open boxes one Christmas morning. We still talk about those two dolls. Christmas was always so special. We always had a sparkling, beautiful tree.<sup>1</sup>

Jim recalls the summer in the late 1940's



On a trip, ~1952: Judy, Jim, Bob, Barb.

when Dad took us on a trip to Florida. We saw the old Spanish fort at St. Augustine, and the oldest house in America, which was there too. And we kids all got sunburned at Daytona Beach. On the way back we stopped at a motel with a nice pool in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. My father fell in love with the South on that trip, and I think that motel put the idea in his head of building a motel himself. He may have picked the location on the way back. The location turned out to be Glen Burnie, Maryland.<sup>2</sup>



Joe Gurka's motel in Maryland, at about the stage of construction it was in when he learned that the road was soon to be moved.

Sometime around 1950 my father quit his job in Torrington, went down to Maryland, found the spot for his motel, purchased the property, got a job at a steel mill, and started building the motel in his spare time. In June of 1952, after school finished for the year, he moved us down to Harundale, a community in Glen Burnie not far from the the motel site. In retrospect it doesn't seem like a move that my mother would have liked, but she went along with it, as she went along with all of my father's schemes. My mother sold our Burrville home at the end of May in 1952, agreeing to vacate by the end of June.<sup>717</sup> We changed our family name from Gurka to Gardner with this move. My mother liked the way the name Gardner sounded. I guess we'd decided to Americanize our name. I remember my mother rehearsing the new name with us, to make sure we had it down pat, and wouldn't slip up. We lived at 1225 Guildford Road, in a housing development.<sup>718,719</sup> My mother registered us for school for the Fall, but because of some difference between schools in Maryland and schools in Connecticut we had to start over again in the grades we had just finished. Nevertheless, we loved it there in Maryland. It was a nice neighborhood. It may have been the happiest time in our lives, for us kids. We loved the other kids there, we loved the school, everyone was so nice. And no one beat us up!<sup>1,2</sup>

We didn't attend school in Maryland for long, though. Sometime in late summer my father heard

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† The site for the motel was probably on the Governor Ritchie Highway, also known as Maryland Route 2. This highway, the first high-speed roadway connecting Baltimore and Annapolis, opened in 1934, the year its namesake, Albert C. Ritchie, was defeated after serving as Governor of Maryland for 15 years. Ritchie Highway was less than a quarter mile walk down Guildford Road from the Gurka house. The bypass that ruined Joe Gurka's motel dream is probably the Baltimore-Washington Expressway. The Maryland state-owned section of this road was completed in 1952, and the federal-owned segment was completed two years later. It was the first limited-access highway in Maryland, allowing motorists to travel the 31 mile distance from Baltimore to Washington in 45 minutes. Maryland Route 10, another limited-access road, was also built to bypass the Glen Burnie section of Ritchie Highway, but this probably happened many years later.<sup>720</sup>



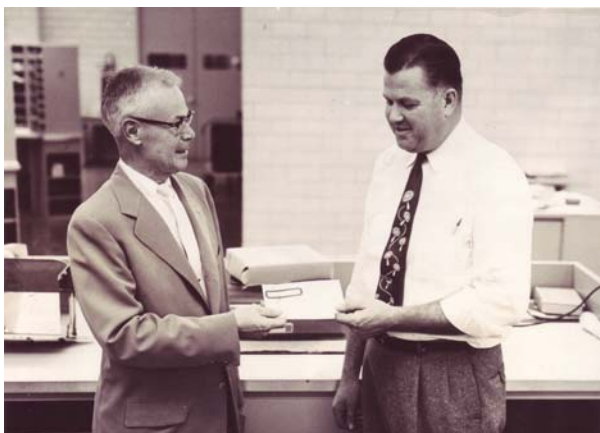
Bob, Barb, Judy and Jim, ~1962.

that the road was being moved, and he realized that his motel would soon be left stranded on an untravelled byway.<sup>†</sup> My cousin Esther remembers the night my father knocked on their door in Burrville—he told her father, in tears, “They’re moving the road!” He had gone up to Connecticut alone, and he stayed at Martin’s house that night. By the time Esther awoke the next morning he was gone, out looking for a house.<sup>6</sup>

Near the end of August of 1952 my parents (together this time) purchased a home on Lindbergh Street, about two miles from downtown Torrington.<sup>721</sup> We didn’t move back right away, though. We kids went to school in Glen Burnie until sometime in October. When we moved back to Torrington we went to school at the Torrington West School, up on Torrington West Street (but a long way from Burrville). This was a much larger school than the little one in Burrville. We entered the grades we would have entered had we had stayed in Torrington. And my father got back his old job at the Brass Mill.<sup>1,2</sup>

Up until about 1951 my parents took us kids to a Methodist Church. After that, though, they took us to Calvary Baptist Church in Torrington. We loved that church. It was a lot of fun. And we were baptized there, of course, when we were old enough to make the decision to do it.<sup>1</sup>

So we grew up in Torrington, and we went to high school at Torrington High. My father, always a sentimental guy, dreamed of keeping the family together for as long as he could. In 1961 he decided to build a home large enough for all of us (at least, this is what we think he had in mind), for when the family started growing. He found the perfect place on Bahre Corner Road in Canton, about 13



Joe Gurka receiving an award at Connecticut General where he worked in the mail room, around 1963 or ‘64.



These are 2006 pictures of a house on Bahre Corner Road in Canton that Joe Gurka built in the early 1960’s. That’s Jim and me in the bottom picture. We knocked on the door, but noone was home.

miles east of Torrington. It was two and a half acres in a woodsy area, with a gurgling brook running along one side. The brook had a little waterfall. My mother purchased the land in June of 1961, and my father started planning the house.<sup>722</sup> We continued living in the house on Lindbergh Street in Torrington while he worked on the new house. It was a beautiful house when he finished, but we never moved in. By that time we four kids had all finished high school. The boys were in college and Judy and I had started working, and I guess it became clear to him that we’d be moving away.



My parents, Joseph and Mildred Gurka, and me on my wedding day, July 22nd, 1967.

By this time my father had retired from his job at the Brass Mill and he had taken a new job at Connecticut General, where he worked in the mail room. He later got a job at Travellers Insurance Company, heading a supply department in a huge building in Windsor Locks. My mother had started working again as soon as we children had grown up enough, as a clerk-typist at the state welfare building in Hartford. These jobs were why they wanted a home closer to Hartford.<sup>1,2</sup>

When my father gave up the idea of moving into the house in Canton he decided to build another new house, a smaller one, up on a rocky bluff overlooking Satans Kingdom Gorge in New Hartford. The Farmington River has a rapids there, and Albany Turnpike crosses the river there, high above the water. My father planned to build the house uphill from the road, hidden in the trees. The area all around there is forest. My mother purchased the land in December of 1964, and my father, at age 49, again started building.<sup>723</sup> Jim and Bob were in their early 20's then, and they helped out a lot. My mother sold the home on Bahre Corner Road in July of 1965.<sup>724</sup> A month later she sold

the home on Lindbergh Street (my father had quit-claimed his interest in it to her in 1961), and she and my father moved into the newly-finished basement while he worked on the house overhead.<sup>725,726</sup>

My brothers lived there with my parents for a short while after the house was ready, and then they got married and started building their own homes, Jim's in Canton and Bob's in Burlington. My father helped them both, of course, and they each helped the other. When my parents sold the house on Lindbergh Street I rented a room in an old hotel in the center of New Hartford, and Judy lived with a lady in West Hartford. Soon afterwards Judy and I moved into an apartment in Avon, closer to where we each worked. And it wasn't long before Judy met and married Calvin Anderson Bensch ("Cal") and I met and married Harry Richard Clark ("Richard").

Sometime after my sister and my brothers and I were grown up, my father took my mother back to Sharon, Pennsylvania, to show her the place where he once lived. Mom told us later that Dad had tears in his eyes there.<sup>1</sup>

In the mid-1970's my parents went on cruises in the Caribbean, finally taking a break from all the hard work over the years. My father died in April of 1977 of a heart attack while driving home. He managed to drive himself seven miles beyond New Hartford, to the hospital in Winsted, drenched in sweat by the time he arrived. He died there at the hospital, a month short of age 62. My mother sold the house in New Hartford and bought a condominium at Canton Hollow, a retirement community off Dowd Avenue in Canton. She died in November, 1980, two weeks short of age seventy, at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital in Torrington. They're both buried in New Hartford.



Mildred Gurka (my mother) and Susan Clark (my daughter) around 1978. My mother was an excellent piano player.

## Appendix A

### Jan Tomko Family Sheet

#### Ján Tomko

- b. 12 Mar. 1857, Štrba <sup>a8</sup> (in Upper Hungary, which is present-day Slovakia)
- d. 19 Apr. 1919, Štrba <sup>a40</sup>

#### m1. Zuzana Húska, 24 Jan. 1881, Štrba <sup>a10</sup>

- b. 10 Mar. 1861, Štrba <sup>a8</sup>
- d. 26 Oct. 1903, Štrba <sup>a42</sup>

#### Zuzana Tomko, daughter

(Susan)

- b. 17 June 1885, Štrba <sup>a8</sup>
  - d. (18 July 1974) <sup>a6</sup>, (Somerville, NJ) <sup>a1</sup>, (buried Greenville Cem., Greenville, NY) <sup>a12</sup>
  - m1. **Joseph Hechko**, 14 Feb. 1910, City Hall, Manhattan, NYC, NY
  - m2. **Fred Kummer**, 28 Oct. 1943, Greenville, Greene Co., NY
- (see the Joseph Hechko family sheet for more detail on both marriages)*

#### Jan Tomko, son

- b. 17 Dec. 1887, Štrba <sup>a8</sup>
- d. 21 Apr. 1890, prob. Štrba <sup>a8</sup>

#### Maria Tomko, daughter

(Mary)

- b. 15 Nov. 1889, Štrba <sup>a8</sup>
- d. (8 Oct. 1980) <sup>a1</sup>, prob. Somerville, NJ
- m. **John Poliacik** <sup>a1</sup>, ~1908 <sup>a18</sup>, (possibly in Greenwich, CT) <sup>a15</sup>
  - b. 13 Aug. 1884, Sučany, present-day Slovakia <sup>a16</sup>
  - d. 1952 <sup>a1</sup>, prob. Somerville
- John Poliacik**, son, b. (25 June 1910) <sup>a1</sup> (22 June 1910) <sup>a17</sup>, CT <sup>a18</sup>; d. (23 Apr. 1996) <sup>a17</sup>
  - m. (**Jean \_\_\_\_\_**) <sup>a1</sup>, (b. 16 Sept. 1915, d. July 1983) <sup>a19</sup>
- Mary (Marie) Poliacik**, daughter, b. (13 Aug. 1913) <sup>a1</sup>, PA <sup>a18</sup>, d. (25 July 2006) <sup>a20</sup>
  - m. **Henry Baer** <sup>a1</sup>
- Stephen Poliacik**, son, b. (6 July 1915) <sup>a1</sup>, NJ <sup>a18</sup>, d. (9 Aug. 1985) <sup>a1</sup>
  - m. (**Shirley \_\_\_\_\_**) <sup>a1</sup>
- Joseph Poliacik**, son, b. (23 June 1917) <sup>a1</sup>, NJ <sup>a18</sup>,
  - d. (15 Jan. 1945) <sup>a21</sup>, (Leghorn Italy, WWII) <sup>a1</sup>, buried in NJ <sup>a22</sup>
- Emily Poliacik**, daughter, b. (4 Apr. 1919) <sup>a1</sup>, NJ <sup>a18</sup>, d. (25 July 1993) <sup>a1</sup>
  - m. **George Osterman** <sup>a1</sup>

(continued on next page)

**Anna Tomko**, daughter

**(Anna)**

b. 6 Apr. 1892, Štrba <sup>a8</sup>

d. (6 Feb. 1974) <sup>a7</sup>, (Homerville, OH) <sup>a3</sup>

m1. **Stephen Kobezda** <sup>a4</sup>, (prob. ~1911, Cleveland, OH) <sup>a28</sup>

b. (13 June 1882) <sup>a24,a25</sup>, (Košice, present-day Slovakia) <sup>a4</sup> (Obaszeplak) <sup>a26</sup>

d. (Nov. 1975) <sup>a25</sup>, (Cleveland, OH) <sup>a3</sup>

**Benjamin F. Kobezda**, son, b. (9 June 1912) <sup>a27</sup>, OH <sup>a28,a29</sup>, d. (1 Aug. 1988) <sup>a27</sup>

m. **Eleanore Oldes** <sup>a3</sup> (b. 28 Jan. 1915, d. 18 Mar. 2000) <sup>a30</sup>

**Anna Kobezda**, daughter, b. (23 Mar. 1914) <sup>a7</sup>, OH <sup>a28,a29</sup>, d. (25 Aug. 1999) <sup>a7</sup>

m. **Joseph Ludrovsky** <sup>a4</sup> (b. 23 Apr. 1914) <sup>a31</sup> (d. 25 Nov. 1944, France, WWII) <sup>a32</sup>

**Helen Kobezda**, daughter, b. (23 Nov. 1917) <sup>a7</sup>, OH <sup>a28</sup>, d. (14 Mar. 1999) <sup>a7</sup>

m1. **Frank Augustine** <sup>a3</sup>

m2. **Clarence Behrendt** <sup>a3</sup> (d. Apr. 1958) <sup>a33</sup>

divorced ~1923, prob. (Anna left Steven and took Helen with her.) <sup>a3</sup>

m2. **Louis Paul Czenkner**, 1 Nov. 1924 <sup>a3</sup>

b. (21 Oct. 1888) <sup>a34</sup>, (Nadrag, Hungaria (present-day Romania)) <sup>a3,a34</sup>

d. Dec. 1961, Lodi, OH <sup>a3</sup>

**Lillian June Czenkner**, daughter, b. 15 June 1933, Cleveland, OH <sup>a3</sup>

m. **Eugene Ellwood Reinke**, 1956 (b. 1924, d. 1971) <sup>a3</sup>

*Louis Czenkner*

m1. **Wilhemina** (“Mina”) **Schier** <sup>a3</sup>, ~1918, prob. Cleveland, OH

b. ~1901, Cetrim, Hungaria (present-day Romania) <sup>a35</sup>

d. 27 Jan. 1924, Ellis Island, NYC, NY <sup>a3,a35</sup>

**Adolph Czenkner**, son b. 19 Oct. 1918; d. 1960, in Massillon, OH. <sup>a3</sup>

**Žofia Tomko**, daughter

**(Sophie)**

b. 16 Aug. 1894, Štrba <sup>a8</sup>

d. 4 Aug. 1993, Hilo, Hawaii <sup>a1</sup>

m. **John Fano**, 17 Feb. 1917, Manhattan, NYC, NY <sup>a36,a1</sup>

b. (15 May 1893) <sup>a1,a37</sup>, (Kolárovice, Hungaria (present-day Slovakia)) <sup>a1</sup>

d. 14 Apr. 1981, Burbank, CA <sup>a1</sup>

**Mildred Magdalene Fano**, daughter, b. 24 July 1918, Manhattan, NYC, NY <sup>a1</sup>

m. **Frank Schmidt**, 30 Oct. 1949 <sup>a1</sup>

**John Daniel Fano**, son, b. 29 July 1924, Manhattan, NYC, NY <sup>a1</sup>

m. **June Schumacher**, 21 Jan. 1956, Burbank, CA <sup>a2</sup>

*The Fano family Americanized their name to **Fann** on 2 Oct. 1939. <sup>a1</sup>*

**Pavol Tomko**, son

**(Paul)**

b. 20 May 1901, Štrba <sup>a41</sup>

d. (6 Oct. 1971) <sup>a5</sup>, (Štrba) <sup>a2</sup>

m. (**Anna** \_\_\_\_\_, before Feb. 1928) <sup>a38</sup>

*Paul and Anna had children, we think, who died young. <sup>a1,a2</sup>*

Ján Tomko

m2. **Zuzana (nee Dusík) Otčenás**, 15 Apr. 1906, Štrba <sup>a39</sup>

## References for Jan Tomko Family Sheet

### Abbreviations:

**Ancestry.com** = www.ancestry.com, Provo, UT, Online database.

**NARA** = National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

**US Census nnnn** = United States Census for the year “nnnn”, from a number of NARA microfilm series, digitized and available on-line through *Ancestry.com*.

**WWI Draft Reg.** = World War I Selective Service System Draft Cards, 1917-1918, Series M1509. The microfilm roll numbers are FHL numbers, followed by NARA microfilm roll numbers in parentheses.

**WWII Draft Reg.** = U.S. World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942, NARA (*Ancestry.com* database on-line). Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2007. Original data: United States, Selective Service System. Selective Service Registration Cards, World War II: Fourth Registration.

**NY Passenger Lists** = New York Passenger Lists, 1897-1957, NARA microfilm series T715, digitized and available on-line through *Ancestry.com*.

**SSDI** = Social Security Death Index, accessible from *Ancestry.com* and other websites.

**SlovakiaArchives–Bytči** = Štátny archív v Bytči, the Slovakia National Archives branch for the Žilina region.

**ŠtrbaParish2** = The registers of the Štrba parish of the Evangelical a. c. Church (the Lutheran Church) in Slovakia, cited as (vol. #):(p. #), no. (record #), searched for us by *SlovakiaArchives–Bytči*.

**ŠtrbaRegOfc** = Town of Štrba (Slovakia) Registry Office (Obec Štrba Matričný Úrad). These records were obtained for us by Daniel Jochman, and electronically sent to us by Luboslav Jochman.

a1. Information provided by Mildred Fann Schmidt in 2006.

a2. Information provided by John and June Fann in 2007.

a3. Information provided by Lillian Reinke in 2006.

a4. Information provided by Dan & Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye, 2006.

a5. Information included in a letter from Sofie Tomko Fann to her daughter Mildred Fann Schmidt, sent sometime in the late 1970's. Sophie wrote the letter to pass on to Mildred birth, marriage and death dates that she had copied from her sister Maria Poliacik's Tomko family Slovak Bible. Maria brought the Bible with her when she came to America in 1907.

a6. Funeral cards in possession of Mildred Schmidt in 2006.

a7. Funeral cards in possession of Lillian Czenkner Reinke in 2006.

a8. *ŠtrbaParish2*, baptism records: II:81, no. 10, Johanes Tomko; II:94, no. 16, Susana Huska; II:175, no. 26, Susaňa Tomko; II:189, no. 39, Johanes Tomko; III:11, no. 47, Maria Tomko; III:24, no. 16, Anna Tomko; III:36, no. 34, Zsofia Tomko.

a10. *ŠtrbaParish2*, marriages, IV:116, no. 5, Johànes Tomko and Susanna Húska.

a12. Greenville Cemetery burial records, courtesy of Ron Bauman, Greenville, NY, via Taylor Monuments, Hannacroix, NY.

a15. *US Census 1910*, Greenwich Town, Fairfield Co., CT, E.D. 79, sheet 14B, line 78: John Poletchick. (Since the family was living in Greenwich in 1910, John and Mary may have been married there, ~1908.)

a16. *WWII Draft Reg.*: John Poliacik, b. 13 Aug. 1884, mic. roll WWII\_2383024.

a17. *SSDI*: John Poliacik, SSN 085-18-7415.

a18. *US Census 1930*, Somerville, Somerset Co. NJ, E.D. 18-46, Sheet 1B, Line 97: John Poliacik. (The ages at which John and Mary first married were given as 24 and 18, respectively.)

a19. *SSDI*: Jean Poliacik, SSN 144-60-1013.

a20. *SSDI*: Marie Baer, SSN 137-26-2477.

a21. American Merchant Marine at War, www.usmm.org, by the U.S. Maritime Service Veterans. Click on Merchant Mariners killed on U.S. operated ships during World War II. Joe Poliacik d. 15 Jan. 1945, ship Calvin Coolidge.

a22. U.S. Rosters of World War II Dead, 1939-1945 (*Ancestry.com* database on-line). Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2007. Original data: United States. Army. Quartermaster General's Office. *Rosters of World War II Dead (all services)*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army. Joe Poliacik, Merchant Marine, Service No. 441887.

a24. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1832068, Draft Board 1, West Park, Cuyahoga Co., OH, Steve Kobezda.

a25. *SSDI*: Stephen Kobezda, SSN 282-26-5144.

a26. *NY Passenger Lists*: Istvan Kobezda, arrived 10 Oct. 1906 on Slavonia, mic. roll T715\_779, p. 107, line 7.

a27. *SSDI*: Ben F. Kobezda, SSN 284-01-0233.

a28. *US Census 1920*, West Park Township, Cuyahoga Co. OH, E.D. 604, Sheet 13B, Line 97: Stephen Kobezda.

- a29. *US Census 1930*, Cleveland City, Cuyahoga Co. OH, E.D. 18-747, Sheet 5A, Line 32: Stephen Kobezda.
- a30. *SSDI*: Eleanore M. Kobezda, SSN 284-01-0191.
- a31. Written on the back of a picture in the possession of Carol Ludrovsky Maichrye, 2006.
- a32. WWII Casualty Listings, Ancestry.com: Joseph G. Ludrovsky, d. 25 Nov. 1944, buried Epinal American Cemetery, plot A, row 17, grave 71, Epinal, France; 30th Infantry Reg., 3rd Infantry Div., Purple Heart, WWII Honor Roll.
- a33. Obituary reference, Cleveland Public Library's Cleveland Necrology Index, reel #092, Id# 0420882.
- a34. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1831776, Draft Board 12, Cleveland, Cuyahoga Co., OH, Louis Czenkner.
- a35. *NY Passenger Lists*: Louis Czenkner & family, arrived 11 Nov. 1923 on Manchuria, mic. roll T715\_3412, page 32, lines 15-17; and p. 76 (Record of Detained Aliens), no. 46.
- a36. Marriage certificate, John Fano / Sophia Tomko, m. 2/17/1917, Manhattan, NYC, NY; State of New York, The City of New York, Dept. of Health, cert. no. 6136.
- a37. *SSDI*: John Fann, SSN 068-10-1914.
- a38. National Archives of Australia, Series B78, Item: CZECHSLOVAKIAN / TOMKO PAUL (Item No. 5930597, Accession No. 2004/00236373), Title: TOMKO, Paul; Two items, actually—an Application for [Alien] Registration and a Certificate of [Alien] Registration, both dating from 1948.
- a39. Marriage certificate, Ján Tomko and Zuzana Otčenás nee Dusík; *StrbaRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1906, p. 317, no. 8.
- a40. Death certificate, Ján Tomko; *StrbaRegOfc*: vol. 3, year 1919, p. 74, no. 12.
- a41. Birth certificate, Pavol Tomko; *StrbaRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1901, p. 338, no. 14.
- a42. Death certificate, Zuzana (Húska) Tomko; *StrbaRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1903, p. 383, no. 46.

## Appendix B

### Joseph Hechko Family Sheet

#### Joseph Hechko

- b. (8 Oct. 1873)<sup>b2</sup>, (Silesia)<sup>b26</sup> (most likely in present-day Poland, but a small part of former Silesia is in present-day Austria) )
- d. 7 July 1943, Queens Village, Queens borough, NYC, NY<sup>b28</sup>

m1. **Marie Petruvka**, 26 Apr. 1903, Manhattan<sup>b26</sup>

- b. (~Nov. 1883)<sup>b24</sup> (probably Slovakia)
- d. 8 Dec. 1909, Manhattan borough, NYC, NY<sup>b24</sup>

#### Joseph Hechko, son

- b. (25 Oct. 1903)<sup>b16,b23</sup>, (Manhattan borough, NYC, NY)<sup>b23</sup>
- d. Jul. 1974<sup>b10</sup> (last resided at River Edge, Bergen Co., NJ)<sup>b10</sup>
- m1. **Sadie Cohen**, 14 Apr. 1926, at 237 East Broadway, Manhattan<sup>b29</sup>
  - b. (1907/1908, Brooklyn, NY)<sup>b29</sup>

**Marilyn Hecker**, daughter, b. 1929, NY<sup>b12</sup>

- m2. **Christine** \_\_\_\_\_<sup>b21</sup>, (sometime in the 1950's, place unknown)<sup>b21</sup>  
*Joseph and Sadie changed their surname between 1926 and 1930 from "Hechko" to "Hecker" "Sadie" appears to be have been known also as "Sallie")*.<sup>b12</sup> *Joseph gave himself the middle name "Charles."*<sup>b16</sup>

#### Rudolf Hechko, son

- b. (16 Mar. 1905)<sup>b17,b20</sup>, (Manhattan borough, NYC, NY)<sup>b20</sup>
- d. (Aug. 1982)<sup>b11</sup> (possibly Farmingdale, Monmouth Co., NJ)<sup>b11</sup>
- m. ?

#### Helen<sup>b1</sup> Hechko, daughter

- b. (~1907/1908)<sup>b1,b13</sup>, (New York)<sup>b1,b13</sup>
- d.
- m. (**Frank M. Doyne**)<sup>b13</sup>, (14 Feb. 1927, Bronx, NYC, NY)<sup>b36</sup>
  - b. ~1902/1903, NY<sup>b13</sup> (poss. 6 Oct 1903)<sup>b39</sup>
  - d. (poss. Jan 1983)<sup>b39</sup>

**Richard F. Doyne**, son, b ~1929, NY<sup>b13</sup>

#### Joseph Hechko

- m2. **Susanna Tomko**, 14 Feb. 1910, City Hall, Manhattan, NYC, NY<sup>b19</sup>
  - b. (17 Jun. 1885)<sup>b21</sup> (Štrba, Hungaria (now Slovakia))<sup>b21</sup>
  - d. (18 July 1974)<sup>b22</sup>, (Somerville, NJ)<sup>b21</sup>, (buried Greenville Cem., Greenville, NY)<sup>b21</sup>

#### Mildred<sup>b3</sup> Susan<sup>b5</sup> (Suzanne)<sup>b15</sup> Hechko, daughter

- b. 23 Nov. 1910<sup>b7</sup>, West 118 St.,<sup>b18</sup> New York City, NY<sup>b7</sup>
- d. 10 Nov. 1980, Torrington, CT<sup>b7</sup>
- m. **Joseph Gurka**, ~1940 or so, maybe NY  
(see Joseph Gurka family sheet for more detail on this marriage)

**Martha**<sup>b3</sup> **Hechko**, daughter (no middle name)<sup>b14</sup>

b. 10 Mar. 1918<sup>b8</sup>, New York<sup>b3</sup>

d. Apr. 1987 (last resided at Oxford or Great Meadows, Warren Co., NJ)<sup>b8</sup>

(buried 8 May 1987, Greenville Cemetery, Greenville, NY)<sup>b38</sup>

Susanna Tomko Hechko m2.

**Fred Kummer**, (28 Oct. 1943, Greenville, Greene Co., NY)<sup>b34</sup> (Fritz)<sup>b30</sup>

b. 27 Apr. 1889, Limpach, canton of Bern, Switzerland<sup>b37</sup>

d. 18 May 1961, Greenville, Greene Co., NY<sup>b35</sup>

*Fred Kummer*

*m1. Bertha Muff, ~1918, poss. in Iowa*<sup>b33,b34</sup>

*Frederick Kummer, son, b. Apr. or May 1919, IA (prob. Washington twp., in Crawford Co.)*<sup>b33</sup>  
*divorced 1925, Milwaukee, WI*<sup>b34</sup>

## References for Joseph Hechko Family Sheet

### Abbreviations:

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**SSDI** = Social Security Death Index, accessible from *Ancestry.com* and other websites.

**SSN-App** = Social Security Account Number Application, obtained from the Social Security Administration under the Freedom of Information Act.

b1. *US Census 1910*, Manhattan Borough, NYC Ward 12, NY Co., NY, E.D. 537, Sheet 4B, Line 66: Joseph Hechko.

b2. *WWI Draft Reg.*, Roll 1786973, Draft Board 169, Manhattan, NY, NY, Joseph Hechko.

b3. *US Census 1920*, Manhattan, NYC Ward 19 “A.D.”?, NY Co., NY, ED 1321, Sheet 13B, Line 64: John Fano (including Sussie Hechko and her daughters).

b4. *US Census 1930*, Cossachie Town, Greene Co., NY, ED 20-14, Sheet 9B, Line 73: Emma Schnare (including Fred and Frank Kummer).

b5. Information provided by Barbara Gurka Clark in 2006.

b7. Death certificate, Mildred Gurka, d. 10 Nov. 1980, Torrington, CT. Conn. State Dept. of Health, Public Health Statistics Section, Hartford, CT.

b8. *SSDI*: Martha Hechko, SSN 128-20-1618.

b10. *SSDI*: Joseph Hecker, SSN 055-09-0795.

b11. *SSDI*: Rudolph Hechko, SSN 092-09-6141.

b12. *US Census 1930*, Brooklyn Borough, Kings Co., NY, ED 24-504?, Sheet 9A, Line 42: Joseph Hecker.

b13. *US Census 1930*, New York City, Bronx Co., NY, ED 3-626, Sheet 24A, Line 4: Frank M. Doyne (including Rudolf Hechko).

b14. *SSN-App*: SSN 128-20-1618, Martha Hechko, 8 Nov. 1943.

b15. *SSN-App*: SSN 090-03-6014, Mildred Suzanne Hechko, 25 Nov. 1936.

b16. *SSN-App*: SSN 055-09-0795, Joseph Charles (Fictitious) Hecker, 20 Nov. 1936.

- b17. *SSN-App*: SSN 092-09-6141, 5 Dec. 1936, Rudolph Hechko. The first 'K' in his mother's maiden name, PETRUKKA, is overtyped by some other letter, perhaps an 'F'.
- b18. Joseph and Mildred Gurka family Bible, now (2006) in possession of Judith Gurka Bensch.
- b19. Marriage certificate, Joseph Hechko and Susie Tomko, NYC Dept. of Health, Cert. No. 5023, m. 14 Feb. 1910.
- b20. Birth certificate, Rudolf Hechko, NYC Dept. of Health, Cert. No. 14038, b. 16 Mar. 1905.
- b21. Information provided by Mildred Fann Schmidt in 2006.
- b22. Funeral cards in possession of Mildred Fann Schmidt in 2006.
- b23. Birth certificate, Joseph Hechko, City of NY, State of NY, Cert. No. 47064, b. 25 Oct. 1903. (Maria Petrouka(?) bore no previous children.)
- b24. Death certificate, Mary Hechko, NYC Dept. of Health, Cert. No. 35530, d. 8 Dec. 1909.
- b25. *New York Passenger Lists*: Charles Hecsko (Hechko misspelled) arrived 30 Dec. 1905 on "Graf Waldersee," mic. roll T715\_653, p. 8, line 12.
- b26. Marriage certificate, Joseph Hechko and Marie Petruvka, NYC Dept. of Health, Cert. No. 8283, m. 26 Apr. 1903.
- b27. *New York Passenger Lists*: Maria Petruvka arrived 22 Dec. 1900 on "H. H. Meier," mic. roll T715\_165, page 49, line 13.
- b28. Death certificate, Joseph Hechko, NYC Dept. of Health, Borough of Queens, Cert. No. 5682, d. 7 July 1943.
- b29. Marriage certificate, Joseph Hechko (Jr.) and Sadie Cohen, NYC Dept. of Health, Borough of Manhattan, Cert. No. 10658, m. 14 Apr. 1926.
- b30. *NY Passenger Lists*: Fritz Kummer, arrived 7 Oct. 1913 on "Niagara," page 143, line 19.
- b31. *WWI Draft Reg.*, Roll 1642994, Draft Board 0, Crawford Co., OH, Fritz Kummer. (Ancestry.com)
- b33. *US Census 1920*, Washington Township, Crawford Co., OH, E.D. 88, Sheet 5A, Line 49, Fred Kummer.
- b34. Marriage certificate, Fred Kummer and Susan Hechko, State of NY Dept. of Health, cert. no. 41991, m. 26 Oct. 1943, Greenville, Greene Co., NY.
- b35. Death certificate, Fred Kummer, New York State Dept. of Health, Vital Records Section, Genealogy Unit, Certificate No. 33733, d. 18 May 1961.
- b36. New York City Brides Index (1927-1937), <http://stevemorse.org/vital/nymarriages.php>: Hechko, Helen, m. 14 Feb. 1927, cert. no. 918, Bronx, groom: Frank M. Dryne.
- b37. *SSN-App*: SSN 083-14-4133, Fred Kummer, 1 Dec. 1939.
- b38. Greenville Cemetery burial plot records, courtesy of Ron Baumann, via Taylor Monuments, Greenville, NY.
- b39. *SSDI*: Frank Doyne, SSN 069-01-8956. (Is this the correct Frank Doyne?)



## Appendix C

### John Gurka Family Sheet

#### **Ján (John) Gurka**

- b. 25 May 1869, Betlanovce, Upper Hungary (present-day Slovakia) <sup>c35</sup>
- d. 31 July 1932, Poprad-Veľká, Czechoslovakia (present-day Slovakia) <sup>c47</sup>
- m. **Zuzana (Susan) Tomo**, 16 Feb. 1896, Veľká, present-day Slovakia <sup>c36</sup>
  - b. 21 Apr. 1874, Štrba, (present-day Slovakia) <sup>c49</sup>
  - d. 26 Jan. 1943, Cleveland, OH <sup>c18</sup>

#### **Ján Gurka**, son

- b. 26 Mar. 1896, Poprad-Veľká <sup>c42</sup>
- d. 15 Apr. 1896, Poprad-Veľká, at age 19 days <sup>c43</sup>

#### **Zuzana (Susan) Gurka**, daughter

- b. 1 May 1898, Poprad-Veľká <sup>c44</sup>
- d. 28 Nov. 1922, Sharon, PA <sup>c22</sup>
- m. **Joseph Yohman**, 20 Nov. 1918, Sharon, PA <sup>c27</sup>
  - b. (8 May 1895) <sup>c48</sup> (Iliašovce, present-day Slovakia) <sup>c57-c59</sup> (as “Josef Jochman”)
  - d. June 1983, prob. Sharpsville, PA <sup>c48</sup>

#### **Evelyn Yohman**, daughter

- b. 30 June 1919, Sharon, PA <sup>c14</sup>
- d. 30 Aug. 2005, Torrington <sup>c14</sup>
- m. **John Barger**, 14 June 1947, Torrington, CT <sup>c13</sup>

#### **Ján (John) Gurka**, son

- b. 21 Sept. 1901, Poprad-Veľká <sup>c45</sup>
- d. 13 Jun. 1920, Sharon, PA <sup>c21</sup>

#### **Martin Gurka**, son

- b. 21 Nov. 1908, Poprad-Veľká <sup>c46</sup>
- d. (16 June 1967) <sup>c29</sup>, (Canaan, CT) <sup>c30</sup>
- m. **Bertha Esther Tobin**, on or after 23 May 1934 <sup>c28</sup>, (Fredericktown, Ohio) <sup>c51</sup>
  - b. (21 Sept. 1912) <sup>c31</sup>, (Mansfield, OH) <sup>c32</sup>
  - d. (21 Jan. 2002, prob. Fredericksburg, VA) <sup>c31</sup>

#### **David Irving Gurka**, son

- b. 11 June 1938, Torrington, CT <sup>c33</sup>
- d. 12 July 1999, Sylvania, GA <sup>c8</sup>
- m. **Deanna Emprimo** <sup>c8</sup>

#### **Esther Annetia Gurka**, daughter

- b. 3 Nov. 1940, Torrington, CT <sup>c34</sup>
- m. **Richard Remsen** <sup>c32</sup>

#### **Joseph John Gurka**, son

- b. 12 May 1915, Sharon, PA <sup>c20</sup>
- d. 17 Apr. 1977, Winsted, CT <sup>c2</sup>

m. **Mildred Susan Hechko**, 7 May 1938, Jamaica, NY  
(see *Joseph John Gurka family sheet* for more detail on this marriage)

**Ethel Gurka**, daughter

b. 10 Jan. 1918, Sharon, PA <sup>c15</sup>

d. 15 Aug. 1937, Torrington, CT <sup>c15</sup>

Susan Toma Gurka married (2):

**Jacob Luchansky**, 1942, <sup>c23</sup> (possibly in Cleveland, OH) <sup>c52</sup>

b. (25 July 1866, Austria) <sup>c19</sup>, (most likely present-day Slovakia) <sup>c53-c56</sup>

d. 16 Apr. 1951, Cleveland, OH <sup>c19</sup>

## References for John Gurka family sheet:

### Abbreviations:

**Ancestry.com** = www.ancestry.com, Provo, UT, Online database.

**NARA** = National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

**NY Passenger Lists** = New York Passenger Lists, 1897-1957, NARA microfilm series T715, digitized and available online through *Ancestry.com*.

**SlovakiaArchives–Levoèa** = Štátny archív v Levoèi, the Slovakia National Archives branch for the Levoèa region.

**HrabušiceParish** = The combined (baptisms/marriages) register of the Hrabušice parish (with its affiliated church in Betlanovce) of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia (researched for us by SlovakiaArchives–Levoèa).

**SlovakiaArchives–Bytči** = Štátny archív v Bytči, the Slovakia National Archives branch for the Žilina region.

**ŠtrbaParish2** = The registers of the Štrba parish of the Evangelical a. c. Church (the Lutheran Church) in Slovakia (researched for us by Štátny archív v Bytči).

**PopradRegOfc** = City of Poprad (Slovakia) Registry Office (Mesto Poprad Matričný Úrad). These records were obtained for us by Daniel Jochman, and electronically sent to us by Luboslav Jochman.

**SSDI** = Social Security Death Index, accessible from *Ancestry.com* and many other websites.

c2. Death certificate, Conn. State Dept. of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Hartford, CT: Joseph Gurka, d. 17 Apr. 1977.

c8. Obituary for David T. (*sic*) Gurka, *Augusta Chronicle*, 14 July 1999.

c13. Wedding program for Evelyn Yohman and John Barger, belonging to Arthur Barger, 2006.

c14. Information provided by Arthur Barger, 2006.

c15. Index to Records of Deaths in the Town of Torrington, Conn., 1930 through 1939, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT, Town Clerk's office.

c18. Death certificate, Susanna Luchansky, Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, OH, File No. 1696, Reg. No. 807, d. 1/26/1943.

c19. Death certificate, Jacob Luchansky, Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, OH, File No. (22110)?, Reg. No. (too faint to read), d. 4/16/1951.

c20. Birth certificate, Joseph Gurka b. 5/12/1915; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dept. of Health, Vital Records; Mercer County, file number 2283280-1915, filed 11/9/1925 (filed late).

c21. Death certificate, John Gurka, d. 13 Jun. 1920; Commonwealth of Penn., Dept. of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, cert. no. (unreadable).

c22. Death certificate, Susanna Yohman, d. 24 Nov. 1922; Commonwealth of Penn., Dept. of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, cert. no. 107266.

c23. Information in a six page manuscript written by David Irving Gurka in 1994, sent to Esther Gurka Remsen by Deanna Gurka in 2002.

c27. Marriage records, Joseph Yohman and Susan Gurka, Clerk of Courts, Mercer, PA; License no. 16652, m. 20 Nov. 1918.

c28. Marriage License, Knox Co., Ohio, for Martin Gurka and Bertha Tobin, dated 23 May 1934, good anywhere in the state of Ohio, in the possession of Esther Remsen, 2006.

- c29. Funeral card for Rev. Martin Gurka, who died 16 June 1967, in the possession of Esther Remsen, 2006.
- c30. Obituaries for Rev. Martin Gurka, cut out from newspapers in the days following his death on 16 June 1967, in the possession of Esther Remsen, 2006.
- c31. SSDI: Bertha E. Gurka, SSN 088-05-1400. (Fredericksburg, VA, was her last residence of record.)
- c32. Information provided by Esther Remsen in 2006.
- c33. Birth record, David Irving Gurka (b. 11 June 1938); "Records of Births in the Town of Torrington, Connecticut, 1930's", p. 140; Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT.
- c34. Birth record, Esther Annetia Gurka (b. 3 Nov. 1940); "Records of Births in the Town of Torrington, Connecticut, 1940's", p. 132 (or p. 58 in 2nd copy of book); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT.
- c35. Baptism record, Ján Gurka b. 25 May 1869, Betlanovce, *Hrabušice Parish* pp. 80-81.
- c36. Marriage record, Ján Gurka and Zuzanna Tomo, m. 16 Feb. 1896, Vel'ká, marriage register of the Evangelical a. c. (Lutheran church) at Vel'ká, no.:952 (*SlovakiaArchives-Levoča* microfilm roll number?), pp. 154-155.
- c42. Birth certificate, Ján Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1896, p. 15, no. 9.
- c43. Death certificate, Ján Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1896, p. 19, no. 10.
- c44. Birth certificate, Zuzana Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1898, p. 100, no. 12.
- c45. Birth certificate, Ján Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1901, p. 235, no. 30.
- c46. Birth certificate, Martin Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol 2., year 1908, p. 14, no. 50.
- c47. Death certificate, Ján Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol. 3, year 1932, p. 75, no. 31.
- c48. SSDI: Joseph Yohman, SSN 211-07-9512. (Sharpsville, PA, was his last residence of record.)
- c49. *Štrba Parish*2, baptisms, vol. II, p. 139, no. 18, Susanna Tomo.
- c51. They were undoubtedly married in the Church of God in Fredericktown, OH, where Martin was serving as youth minister and where Bertha was the piano player, at the time. They were married by the Rev. Emmett Wilson, the pastor there. (All of this according to Esther Remson, 2006.)
- c52. There is no record of their marriage in the marriage record index volumes at the Torrington CT City Hall. The next most likely place is Cleveland, where Jacob Luchansky lived and preached.
- c53. Based on the following three records it seems most likely that Jacob Luchansky was born in present-day Slovakia.
- c54. *US Census 1910*, 4th Ward of Sharon Boro, Mercer Co., PA, ED 179, Sheet 31, Line 76: Jacob Luchansky. (Birthplace = Hungary, language spoken = Slovak (he could not speak English in 1910)).
- c55. *US Census 1920*, Cleveland City, Cuyohoga Co. OH, ED 334, Sheet 50, Line 74: Jacob Luchansky. (Birthplace = Austria, mother tongue = "Slavish").
- c56. *US Census 1930*, Cleveland City, Ward 29, Cuyohoga Co. OH, ED 18-506, Sheet 3, Line 65: Jacob Luchansky. (Birthplace = Czechoslovakia, mother tongue = Bohemian).
- c57. The identification of present-day Iliašovce, Slovakia, as the birthplace of Josef Jochman (AKA Joseph Yohman) is most directly established by a present-day regeneration of the birth certificate for Jakub Jochman (Jack Yohman), another son of Jacob and Katalin, obtained in February 2007 from the Republic of Slovakia. It gives "Iliašovce" as the birthplace. A 1913 ship's passenger list gives "Hlesfalva" (a spelling variant of Illesfalu, the Hungarian form of Iliašovce). The regenerated birth certificate was obtained by Daniel Jochman, son of Helena Jochman (who presently lives in Iliašovce), and forwarded to us by Daniel's son Luboslav. These Jochmans are distant relatives of Arthur Barger, son of Evelyn Yohman Barger.
- c58. *NY Passenger Lists*: Josef Jochmann arrived 25 June 1913 on "Kronprinzessin Cecelie," list 25, line 23 .
- c59. Birth certificate (RODNÝ LIST) for Jakub Jochman, b. 7 Jan. 1901, son of Jakub Jochman and Katarina (nee Bong), from Slovenská Republika, February 2007.



## **Appendix D**

### **Joseph John Gurka Family Sheet**

#### **Joseph John Gurka**

- b. 12 May 1915, Sharon, PA
- d. 17 Apr. 1977, Winsted, CT <sup>d4</sup>

- m. **Mildred Susan Hechko**, 7 May 1938, Church of God, Jamaica, NY <sup>d2</sup>
- b. 23 Nov. 1910, Manhattan, New York City, NY
- d. 10 Nov. 1980, Torrington, CT

#### **Judith Ann Gurka** (twin to James) <sup>d2</sup>

- b. 12 Nov. 1941, Torrington, CT <sup>d2</sup>
- d. 3 Apr. 2007, New Hartford, CT
- m. **Calvin Anderson Bensch**, 17 Jun. 1967 <sup>d2</sup>
- Kristen Bensch** <sup>d2</sup>
- Karyn Bensch** <sup>d2</sup>
- Kim Bensch** <sup>d2</sup>
- Calvin Bensch, Jr.** <sup>d2</sup>

#### **James Joseph Gurka** (twin to Judith) <sup>d2</sup>

- b. 12 Nov. 1941, Torrington, CT <sup>d2</sup>
- m. **Diane Cahill** <sup>d2</sup> (Diane Lynn \_\_\_\_ ) <sup>d3</sup>
- Amy Lynn Gurka** <sup>d2</sup>
- Jason Gurka** <sup>d2</sup>
- divorced

#### **Barbara Aline Gurka** (twin to Robert)

- b. 15 Jan. 1944, Torrington, CT <sup>d2</sup>
- d. 3 Sept. 2006, New Haven, CT
- m. **Harry Richard Clark** (“Richard”), 22 Jul. 1967, Collinsville, CT
- b. 7 Mar. 1940, Baltimore, MD
- Susan Elizabeth Clark**, b. 9 June 1968, Torrington, CT
- Richard Allen Clark**, b. 26 Aug. 1969, Torrington, CT

#### **Robert John Gurka** (twin to Barbara)

- b. 15 Jan. 1944, Torrington, CT <sup>d2</sup>
- m. **Kathy Gregor** <sup>d2</sup>
- Robert Gurka** <sup>d2</sup>
- divorced

#### **References for Joseph John Gurka Family Sheet:**

- d2. Joseph and Mildred Gurka family Bible, now in possession of Judy Bensch.
- d3. Land records, Town of Canton, CT, index mentions James Joseph and Diana Lynn Gurka.
- d4. Death certificate, Joseph Gurka, d. 17 Apr. 1977; Town Clerk, Town Hall, Winsted, CT



## Appendix E

### The Cleveland Tomko Five Cousins, and Auntie Daniel and Early Tomko/Huska Family History

#### Early Tomko Family History

In Chapter 1 we presented the Tomko family tree. Here we're going to expand upon that. We'll start with the earliest Tomko ancestors that we know of, and work our way from them to my grandmother. \* Along the way we'll bring the Huska family into the picture. This story should be of interest to descendants of "The Five Cousins," too. The Huska part of our Tomko tree applies to them directly, of course, when "Zuzanna Huska (1861-1903, m. 1881)" is replaced by "Alzbeta Huska (1863-~1920s, m. 1887)." And the earliest part of the Tomko half of the tree applies to them also, but the rest of the Tomko half requires considerable overhaul. We'll present their tree later.

The earliest Tomko that we know of, the Tomko great-great-great-grandfather of my grandmother, Zuzana (Tomko) Hechko, is Tomas Kussnjerik. His surname was not Tomko! "Tomko" means "of Tomas," and he was the "Tomas." It was his sons and grandsons who changed their surname, or else other people did it for them; and it took a while for the new name to catch hold.† We don't really know exactly how it came to happen, but we do know for certain that it happened. The record books are full of references like "Tomko alias Kussnjerik." At the beginning of the name change "Tomko" was often spelled "Tomo" and "Thomo." After a while, some families adopted "Tomko" and others adopted "Tomo." In fact, my two grandmothers, born Zuzana Tomko and Zuzana Tomo, were distant "Tomko" cousins. Tomas Kussnjerik and his wife Maria Friska were their common "Tomko/Tomo" ancestors.

In what we've written below we've chosen what we consider to be a "proper" surname spelling in each case, to keep things simple. The spellings used in the records, for both surnames and forenames, are different in nearly every record. All of this information (until we note otherwise) is from the Štrba Catholic and Lutheran parish records. You can assume that every person, unless specified otherwise, was born, raised, married and died in Štrba.‡ All of the house numbers mentioned below are Štrba house numbers. Each house in Štrba had a number.

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\* All of this information is from a letter which was a part of the research results obtained for us by the Slovakian Archives at Bytča (Štátny archív v Bytči) in 2007/2008. We were not expecting such comprehensive results on the early Tomko line, but we got them, and so we're presenting them to you.<sup>e01,e02</sup>

‡ It may seem hard to believe that the Tomko ancestry can be traced back so far in the Štrba parish registers. The explanation appears to date back to the Peasant Uprising of 1514, which followed the recruitment of Hungarian peasants to crusade against the Turks, who were then threatening to invade. The peasants lost interest in the original goal and instead rebelled, unsuccessfully, against landlords and nobles. In retaliation the peasant class lost all their rights, including the rights of migration and ownership. It appears that from that time until 1848, when the feudal system was abolished in Hungary, peasants were bound to the land of their landlords.<sup>e03</sup>

† Using the extensive information provided to us by Štátny archív v Bytči, we were able to analyze the name change from Kussnjerik (or the like) to Tomko/Tomo/Thomo. We'll just summarize here what we've learned. The name change took place over a period of about fifty years. The earliest "Tomko" reference (as far as we know) occurred about two weeks before Tomas Kussnjerik's death—"Paulus Tomo (*the father of Matej*) was born 3 March 1776 to Paulus and

## **Tomas Kussnjerik and Maria Friska**

Tomas Kussnjerik was born about 1708, and his wife Maria (also known as “Marina”) Friska was born about 1697, if we go by the age estimates given in the death records, which are often not accurate. We believe they were married before 1741, but there are no marriage records from that time to prove it.\* We know of some of their children, but probably not all. Here are those we know of:

1. **Jan Kussnjerik**, born ~1746, died 16 Jun. 1816, married 1st: Alžbeta Terhay, 6 Nov. 1768; married 2nd: Judita Fafernec/Czirbusz, late 1797.
2. **Juraj Kussnjerik**, born 9 Mar. 1744, died 13 Jun. 1783, married Maria Gaydoss, 6 Nov. 1769.
3. **Pavol Kussnjerik**, born 8 Nov. 1747 (more below).
4. **Ondreg Kussnjerik**, born 7 Oct. 1750, married 1st: Maria Kazar, 16 Jan 1774; . . .

The last of these children, Ondreg, married again after his first wife died: On 1 Aug. 1803, at age 52, he married Zuzana Erziak, the daughter of Pawe Erziak and Katarina Kordovan. Ondreg died of pneumonia on 20 Mar. 1820, “at age about 75,” and his name was given as “Ondreg Tomo” in the death record. Zuzana Erzjak, “widow of Ondreg Thomo,” died eleven years later, on 26 Oct. 1831, of cholera at about age 60. These were the Tomo great-grandparents of my other grandmother, Zuzana (Tomo) Gurka.

Tomas Kussnjerik died on 21 Mar. 1776, at age 68. He was Catholic. Maria, “widow of Tomass Kussnjerik,” died eleven years later, on 10 June 1787, “at age 90” according to the Lutheran death register, and “at age about 98” according to the Catholic death register. Age 90 is probably closer to the mark, since her husband is supposed to have been born about 1708, and since she gave birth to a child in 1750 (at which time she would have been 53 years old if she died at age 90, as opposed to 61 if she died at 98).

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Marina Tomo.” And the last reference to “Kussnjerik” (not counting two “Tomko, formerly Kussnjerik” references in 1839 and 1863, and a lone “Tomko alias Kussnjerik” in 1845) occurred in 1824, in the marriage record of Tomas’s grandson Michal. The change did not proceed smoothly. In the twenty-year period at the end of the 1700’s “Tomko” predominated in the records, and in the twenty-year period at the beginning of the 1800’s “Kussnjerik” predominated. It may be that it was other people, and not the children and grandchildren themselves, who called them “Tomko.” We have no way of knowing for sure. They were apparently known by both surnames for a long time. But we know that it was “Tomko” which prevailed, and “Kussnjerik” which was lost to history. We don’t have any such extensive evidence as this of other name changes in the 1700’s and 1800’s, but we suspect that those surnames in the records which contained a “v.”, such as “Kavaljer v. Krajči,” and “Molitoris v. Jancsjk,” may too have been in the process of change. The “v.” stands for Latin “vel,” which means “or.” So these people were known by both surnames at the times of those records.

\* The record books that exist for that time are the registers for the Catholic parish of Štrba (which include records for both Catholic and Lutheran families), and these do not provide continuous coverage. The marriage records start from 1689 and extend to 1691; and from then until 1741 they do not exist. From 1741 to the present the marriage record coverage is continuous. Because we cannot find a record of the marriage of Tomas and Maria we assume that they were married before 1741. The name “Kussnjerik” appears in several different forms in the record books (as just about all the names do). A few of the other forms were “Kušnierik,” “Kussnjerčik,” and “Kusnjer.” The ‘j’ is simply an ‘i’ in disguise, so you should pretend it’s an ‘i.’ Those last three names would have been pronounced “Kooshny-err-ick,” Koossny-err-chick,” and “Koosny-err.” We’re sticking with one spelling, “Kussnjerik,” to keep things simple. Baptism/birth records exist for 1689 to 1703, 1713 to 1731, and 1741 to the present. There are no records for children of Tomas and Maria in the 1713 to 1731 records, so we can assume that Tomas and Maria were married between 1731 and 1741.

### **Pavol Tomko/Kussnjerik (I)**

The third child listed above, Pavol Kussnjerik, was the great-great-grandfather of my Tomko grandmother, Zuzana (Tomko) Hechko. There is a record of his marriage to “Marina Chalupka” on 13 Nov. 1774, the first marriage for each—both were Lutheran, both from Štrba. The name “Chalupka” is never again mentioned in the record books, however, in association with Maria, wife of Pavol Kussnjerik; and so Štátny archív v Bytči thinks that it must have been an error. They think her surname should have been “Hurčala.”

**Pavol Kussnjerik and Maria Hurčala** had three children:

1. **Pavol Kussnjerik**, born 3 Mar. 1776 (more below).
2. **Mateg Kussnjerik**, born 3 Mar. 1779. (His father was not Catholic, but his mother was converted to Catholic.) “Mateg, the son of Pawel Tomo alias Kussnjerik and Maria Bobček,” died 19 May 1786, at age seven from some kind of ache in the stomach and legs, according to the Lutheran death register. Why his mother’s name was given as “Bobček” here is a mystery, and probably another error. This is the only time it was thus given. This death is also recorded in the Catholic death register, where it appears as “Mathias, son of Paulus Tomo and Maria Kazar.” Another error! In this case, “Maria Kazar” is definitely a mistake, since she was the wife of Pavol’s brother Ondreg, and Ondreg and his wife did not have a son named Mateg.
3. **Zuzanna Kussnjerik**, born 8 Apr. 1782, “to Paulus Tomo and Maria Hurchala,” Protestants. She married widower Pawel Šworcz, of Štrba, on 3 Nov. 1806.

“Maria, wife of Pavol Tomo alias Kussnjerik,” died on 23 Nov. 1791 at age 45. We do not know the names of her parents because they were not mentioned in the marriage record. And Štátny archív v Bytči was not able to find any likely Maria Hurčalas who were born about 1746.

Pavol (Protestant widower Paulus Tomo) married a second time on 7 Jan. 1792, at age 44 to “Catharina Dczuro,” daughter of Jan and Judita Dczuro from Vyšná Šuňava (Superiori Syunyova, a part of the village of Šuňava, in the district of Poprad). Catharina’s surname is given as “Guro,” “Gyuro,” “Dzuro,” and Dczuro” in different records, and Štátny archív v Bytči informs us that these are all different forms of an identical surname.

**Pavol Tomo/Kussnjerik and Katarina Dczuro** had three daughters:

4. **Magdalena Tomo/Kussnjerik**, born 30 Oct. 1792.
5. **Maria Tomo/Kussnjerik**, born 15 July 1794, died 28 Dec. 1795 at age 1 ½ years.
6. **Maria Tomo/Kussnjerik**, born 7 Nov. 1796 (“Marina” in the baptism record).

The baptism records for 4 and 6 tell us that Pavol was Protestant and Katarina was Catholic. Katarina (who was born 19 Sept. 1762) died on 11 Mar. 1798 at age 36.

Widower Pavol Tomo married a third time at age 54 on 11 Apr. 1798, the same day that his son Pavol married. This time Pavol Sr. married Ewa Božoni, the daughter of Jan Božoni and Anna Bednar. Ewa was born 21 July 1766 and had not been married before this marriage.

**Pavol Tomo/Kussnjerik and Ewa Božoni** had two children:

7. **Dorota Tomo/Kussnjerik**, born 3 Mar. 1799, married Pavol Chalupka, son of Michal Chalupka

and Ewa Chladon, on 26 Nov. 1823. Dorota, wife of Pavol Chalupka, died 25 May 1829 at age 30.

8. **Michal Tomo/Kussnjerik**, born 12 Sept. 1800, married Zuzana Jančo. Michal was 20 years old, a Protestant farmer. Zuzana was 22, and her religion was under investigation. Michal died 2 July 1839, at age 39, with painful spasms. Zuzana (Susi), his widow, died 4 Feb. 1845, at age 44, of pneumonia. Michal Tomo/Kussnjerik and Zuzana Jančo were the Tomko great-grandparents of “The Five Cousins.”

Pavol Tomo/Kussnjerik died 25 Aug. 1828, “at age about 65” (he was actually 80!). Ewa, his widow, died 13 June 1834, “at about age 60” (she was 67).

### **Pavol Tomko/Kussnjerik (II)**

The first child listed above, Pavol Kussnjerik, was the great-grandfather of my Tomko grandmother, Zuzana (Tomko) Hechko. As mentioned, he was born 3 Mar. 1776, son of Pavol Kussnjerik and Maria Hurčala. On 11 Apr. 1798 he married Maria Kubisz, who was born 4 Apr. 1777, daughter of Martin and Maria Kubisz. Pavol and Maria were Lutheran.

**Pavol Tomko/Kussnjerik and Maria Kubisz** had six children:

1. **Jan Tomko/Kussnjerik**, born 24 May 1801, died 17 Dec. 1803 at age 2 ½, from measles.
2. **Jan Tomko/Kussnjerik**, born 21 Feb. 1804, died 4 Feb. 1810 at age six, from measles.
3. **Pavol Tomko/Kussnjerik**, born 24 Apr. 1807, married Katarina Scherffel, daughter of Michal Scherffel and Zuzana Kunay, 29 Apr. 1832. Katarina died 8 Feb. 1857, at age 48, in Štrba house 103. Pavol married for the second time to Juliana Brajer, about 1859. Juliana apparently did not come from Štrba. Pavol died 25 May 1883, at age 78 in Štrba house 103.
4. **Maria Tomko/Kussnjerik**, born 20 Apr. 1810, died 3 June 1810 at age 6 months [sic].
5. **Jan Tomko/Kussnjerik**, born 18 Oct. 1813, married Zuzana Petruška, daughter of Juraj Petruška and Anna Kubjk, 4 Feb. 1839. Zuzana died 11 Feb. 1876, at age 57, of a cancer tumor, in Štrba house 121. Jan, a widower of nine years, died 7 Aug. 1885, at age 72, in Štrba house 92.
6. **Mateg Tomko/Kussnjerik**, born 25 Feb. 1820 (more below).

All of these children, from the mid-1820's on, were known by the surname “Tomko.” They had dropped the “or Kussnjerik” part. Maria Kubisz, wife of Pál Tomko, died 5 July 1847, at age 68. Pavol Tomko, widower, died 2 Sept. 1863, at age 90 (actually 87) in Štrba house no. 92.

### **Mateg Tomko**

The sixth child listed above, Mateg Tomko, was the grandfather of my Tomko grandmother, Zuzana (Tomko) Hechko. He first married Maria Molitoris or Jancsik, daughter of Juraj Molitoris or Jancsik and Maria Schulek, on 4 Feb. 1839 (Mateg and his older brother Jan married on the same day). Maria died 19 Mar. 1845, from pulmonary tuberculosis. Mateg married for the second time on 29 June 1845, to Maria Kavaljer or Krajči, daughter of Michal Kavaljer or Krajči and Maria Ivanides. We may not know of all the children of Mateg Tomko. It appears that there were none

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\* The research results from Štátny archív v Bytči, upon which all of the Tomko history presented so far is based, did not extend to the children of Mateg Tomko's marriages. In the research done for us in 2006 by IHFF we received a list of siblings of Jan Tomko (i.e., children of Mateg Tomko). Our IHFF researcher informed us that he could not find any

from the marriage of Mateg to Maria Molitoris or Jancsik.\*

Here are the children of **Mateg Tomko and Maria Kavaljer or Krajči** that we know of: <sup>e05-e08</sup>

1. **Maria Tomko**, born 26 Jan. 1850, died 21 Mar. 1906. (“Marka,” a nickname for “Maria,” was used in the baptism record.)

2. **Pavol Tomko**, born 11 May 1853, died 27 Oct. 1911.

3. **Jan Tomko**, born 12 Apr. 1857, died 19 Apr. 1919.

4. **Zuzana Tomko**, born 2 Feb. 1863.

Jan (soldier and farmer, of house 92) married Zuzana Huska on 24 Jan. 1880. It appears that Pavol married an Anna Greguška sometime before 1884, since they were living in house 92 in 1884 and 1891, when daughters were born. And it appears that Zuzana (of house 92) married a Pavol Koska on 7 April 1885. <sup>e09-e12</sup>

Maria (Kavaljer or Krajči) Tomko died on 8 Sept. 1884, at age 58, from anasarca, in Štrba house 92. Mateg, widower, died 22 Mar. 1887, at age 67, from typhus, in Štrba house 92. <sup>e02</sup>

This is as far as we need to go with the early Tomko family history. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 carry it on from here. Before we move on, though, let’s address one more issue:

### **House Number 92**

We know from what John D. and June Fann heard, when they were in Štrba in 1994, that the house in which John’s mother was born was a log cabin, built of logs about eight inches square. And from the Lutheran parish register records we know that this cabin was Štrba house 92. House numbers first start appearing in the parish records from sometime between 1850 and 1852. The first reference to house 92 appears in one from 1857. It seems likely that the house that stood in 1857 was the same house that the Tomko sisters left when they went to America in 1907 and 1908. And it’s likely that most of the other houses in Štrba were nearly identical to the Tomko log cabin at that time.

House number 121 is another house which is referenced again and again in the parish records in connection with Tomkos. Mateg and Maria Tomko were living there in 1853, when son Pavol was born. But by 1857, when their son Jan was born, they were living in house 92. Mateg’s father died in house 92 in 1863, at age 87, so perhaps house 92 had been Mateg’s parents’ house, and perhaps Mateg and his siblings had been raised in it. Mateg’s mother died in 1847, before house numbers were mentioned in parish records. <sup>e06,e02</sup>

Mateg’s wife, Maria, died in house 92 in 1884, and Mateg himself died there in 1887, so it seems likely that they never lived anywhere else, after 1857. Mateg’s older brother Jan died in house 92 in 1885, but his wife died nine years earlier in house 121, so it’s not so apparent where they lived. Mateg and Jan’s oldest brother, Pavol, was living in house 103 in 1857, when his first wife died, and

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children born before 1850, from either the first marriage or the second. For the children that he listed, since he did not transcribe these baptism records, we requested copies directly from Štátny archív v Bytči, to verify the names of the parents. Our IHFF researcher also provided us some marriage record information. At the time when these marriage records were recorded the parish registers no longer named the parents of the bride and groom; instead they simply indicated the numbers of the houses from which the marriage partners came. <sup>e04</sup>

in 1883, when he himself died; so if he ever lived in house 92, he left it for good when he first married. It was not unusual for two families to live in the same house. We know, for instance, that there were at least two families in house 121 for many years. <sup>e02</sup>

Mateg's son Jan (my grandmother's father) and family were living in house 93 in 1885 when their first child (my grandmother) was born; but by December of 1887 they were back in house 92. They may have moved back in there after Mateg died, in March of that year. Mateg's son Pavol and family were living in house 92 in 1884 and 1891; so it appears that both Jan's and Pavol's families lived together in house 92 for many years—perhaps the whole youth of my grandmother and her siblings. We don't know if any others were also living there. <sup>e13-e17,e10,e11</sup>

### **Michal Huska and Maria Kubisz**

Now we're going to switch to Huska family history. Michal Huska and Maria Kubisz were the parents of Zuzana, Alzbeta and Zsofia Huska. Zuzana (Huska) Tomko was my grandmother's mother; her sister Alzbeta was the mother of "The Five Cousins," and their little sister Zsofia was "Antie Daniel." What we know of this family is by courtesy of IHFF, who thought to include a list of siblings of Zuzana, Alzbeta and Zsofia, with birthdates. This allowed us to request records from Štátny archív v Bytči, which provided us with verification and more detail. <sup>e04,e01</sup>

Michal Huska was born in Štrba on 12 October 1834, a son of miller Jan Huska and his wife Anna (nee Bartos), who by 1852 lived in house 186, which was the new mill in Štrba (there was an old mill, "mola inferior no. 187" nearby). This mill was a grist mill, where all the farmers in Štrba (and just about everyone in Štrba was a farmer) brought their grists of grain to be ground. On 14 June 1852, 17-year-old Michal married 19-year-old Maria Kubisz, daughter of farmer Jan Kubisz and his wife Zuzanna (nee Ballas), who lived in house 151. Maria Kubisz was born 14 August 1833. Michal and Maria and their parents were Lutheran. <sup>e18-e20</sup>

Michal Huska did not take over the operation of the mill from his father for any period of time that we know of, although he probably helped out there as a boy. It appears to have been a Jan Huska, who was born in 1855 and who married a Maria Garaj in 1878, who eventually took over the mill. At the time of his marriage he was a "farmer and miller," and he lived at the mill. His father may have run it before him, or he may have taken it over directly from his grandfather. He was likely the oldest son of his father, since the name "Jan" was traditionally given to the first son, and his father was probably an older brother of Michal, and perhaps the oldest son of Jan Huska and Anna Bartos. It seems likely that the operation of a mill would be have been passed on to the oldest son, if he were willing and able to take on the job. <sup>e04</sup>

Michal himself was a farmer, and he and Maria had settled in her parents' house, number 151, by 1858. For the first four or so years of their marriage, though, they lived at the mill.

The children of **Michal Huska and Maria Kubisz** were:

1. **Maria Huska**, born 29 July 1853.
2. **Anna Huska**, born 13 Jan. 1856.
3. **Jan Huska**, born 17 May 1858, died 1861.
4. **Zuzana Huska**, born 10 Mar. 1861.

5. **Alzbeta Huska**, born 20 Jan. 1865.
6. **Maria Huska**, born 7 Mar. 1869.
7. **Michal Huska**, born 13 June 1871.
8. **Žofia Huska**, born 12 Apr. 1874.

Interestingly, the sponsors (godparents) of all of the Huska children were the same two people—Jan Greguška and Alzbeta Hanzuš.<sup>e21-e28</sup>

Because a second “Maria” was born in 1869 we assume that the first “Maria” died before then; so she died before reaching age 16. 19-year-old Anna (“farmer’s daughter”) married a Jan Garaj in 1875, on her birthday. 19-year-old Zuzana, as we know, married Jan Tomko in 1881. 22-year-old Alzbeta married Pavel Tomko in 1887. And Žofia married Jan Daniel around 1895. We don’t know any more about Maria (b. 1869) or Michal (b. 1871). We know that Anna died in April of 1904, though, and what we know of Zuzana is presented in Chapter 1. We have more to say about Alzbeta and Žofia below.<sup>e29,e09,e30,e47,e22</sup>

We don’t know when Michal Huska died, but we know that his wife Maria (nee Kubisz) died on October 29th of either 1894 (at age 61) or 1897 (at age 64).<sup>e20</sup>

## **Pavol Tomko and Alzbeta Huska and “The Five Cousins”**

Pavol Tomko, who married Alzbeta Huska in 1887, and who lived in house 121 at that time, was born 28 Nov. 1859, a son of Jan Tomko and Anna Garaj. Pavol lived in house 121 from the day he was born. Two families lived there—that of Jan and Anna, and that of Jan’s brother Michal and his wife Zsofia. Jan and Michal Tomko were sons of Michal and Zuzana (Jančo) Tomko, and they too may have grown up in house 121, a generation earlier.\* Son Michal married Zsofia Ballas in 1841, and Jan married Anna Garaj in 1846. Jan died at age 36, in 1861, of tuberculosis (Pavol was two months short of age twelve at the time), and Anna died twelve years later, at age 48, of cholera. Zsofia died at age 53, in 1878, of pneumonia, and Michal died four years later, at age 59, of asthma. All four died in house 121.<sup>e31</sup>

Pavol had two cousins named Jan and Michal Tomko (not to be confused with the fathers), both sons of Michal and Zsofia, who too grew up in house 121. There were very likely other siblings on both sides, but these are all that we know about. Cousin Jan was born in 1856, and he married Maria Ballas in 1878. And cousin Michal was born in 1862, and he married Maria Foltin in 1887. After Pavol married Alzbeta Huska, later in 1887, he left house 121 and moved into Alzbeta’s house, 151.

<sup>e31,e32,e33,e30</sup>

Pavol married Alzbeta on 24 Oct. 1887. He was 28 and she was 23; they were both Protestant, and neither had been married before. Pavol was a “servant” (the Latin word in the marriage record was “servilis”), and Alzbeta was a farmer’s daughter (“rustica”). They had married with the usual triple-banns proclamation (a proclamation of the forthcoming marriage was made three Sundays running, asking if any could show cause for why it should not happen). And there were two comments in the last column. The first, “sponsus miles,” indicates that the witnesses, Johanes Greguška and Michäel Tomko, were soldiers. Ten of the thirteen records on this page of the marriage register bore this same comment. The second, “peccarunt contra VI,” means “they have sinned against VI,” where “VI” refers to the sixth commandment (in the St. Augustine version of the ten commandments—the version used by the Lutheran Church). This commandment is generally stated as “thou shalt not commit adultery,” although it actually has broader scope in the Lutheran catechism. Basically, this comment in the marriage register recorded the fact that Pavol and Alzbeta had not been chaste—and they were in no position to deny this since Alzbeta had a son who was almost three years old.<sup>e30,e34</sup>

Alzbeta’s illegitimate child, Jan, was born on 25 Dec. 1884, and baptized on 31 Dec. In the baptismal record Alzbeta’s surname is given as “Kubis.” There is a comment in Slovak at the bottom of the page (just under this bottom record) which, as Štátny archív v Bytči informs us, means (in approximate translation), “Mother has her father’s name ‘Huska,’ but grandmother’s name is written. She was married to Pavol Tomko later.” It was probably common knowledge at the time that Pavol Tomko was the father. But he was probably a servant, as he was nearly three years later, at the time of the marriage. And it’s likely that his position was based on an “indenture” (a contract) that required that he not marry during its term. When Pavol and Alzbeta did marry, Alzbeta was again pregnant, and perhaps Pavol decided this time to give the child a legitimate birth, and to accept whatever the consequences may be. In the baptism records of their later children his occupation is

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\* The fact that Jan and Michal Tomko were sons of Michal and Zuzana (Jančo) Tomko identifies them as grandchildren of Pavol Tomko/Kussnjerik (the first) and Ewa Božoni, mentioned above (see child no. 8).

given as “farmer.”<sup>e34</sup>

Why did Alzbeta give her surname as “Kubis” when she had Jan baptized? We have no way of knowing, of course, but we can surmise that her father was not happy when his unwed daughter showed signs of pregnancy. It could be that he forbade Alzbeta to have the child baptized as a “Huska,” or it could be that Alzbeta did not dare do so. And it could be that it was Alzbeta’s mother’s idea to use the name “Kubis.” There were many other cases of illegitimate children in the pages of the Štrba baptism registers. The registers do not record the legitimacy of birth prior to sometime between 1850 and 1853. In the sample of records that we’ve been provided, there were 269 baptisms between 1853 and 1894, and 15 of these were of illegitimate children. So about one baptism in eighteen was for an illegitimate child. In only three of those fifteen cases was the father named.<sup>e01</sup>

The children of **Pavol Tomko and Alzbeta Huska** were:

1. **Jan Tomko**, born 25 Dec. 1884.
2. **Pavol Tomko**, born 19 May 1888.
3. **Michal Tomko**, born 15 Nov. 1889. (He had to have died prior to 10 Apr. 1893.)
4. **Anna Tomko**, born 20 Apr. 1891.
5. **Michal Tomko**, born 10 Apr. 1893.
6. **Maria Tomko**, born about 1904 or 1905.

All of the children (we don’t know about Maria, though, because we don’t have her birth record) were born in house 151. And here again, the sponsors of all the children (except possibly Maria) were the same two people—in this case Jan and Maria (Brusik) Greguška. This couple also sponsored at least the middle four of the six children of Jan Tomko and Zuzana Huska (we don’t have the birth record of the sixth). This Jan Greguška is probably not the same Jan Greguška who with Alzbeta Hanzuš a generation earlier sponsored Alzbeta and Zuzana Huska and their siblings, but he is very likely the “Johanes Greguška” who was a witness at Pavol and Alzbeta’s marriage ceremony.

<sup>e34-e39</sup>

Pavol Tomko Sr. died at age 46 on 20 May 1906. His descendants tell us that, to their knowledge, he never left Štrba.<sup>e31,12</sup>

Jan was the first of Pavol and Alsbeta’s children to go to America. He (and Pavol, soon after) may have been sent to America to earn money to help support the family. It’s also likely that they themselves wanted to go. And it’s likely that the family planned to use the money Jan and Pavol earned to get the rest of the family to America. Jan and Pavol were the only two children to leave Štrba before their father died. We think Jan was a 17-year-old “Janos Tomko” who arrived at the port of New York in February of 1900. He and two companions from Štrba were going to Allegheny City (near Pittsburgh) to join an unnamed relative there (an uncle to Jan). And we think Pavol Tomko went to America in 1903. We think he was a 17-year-old “Pal Tomko” (“Pal” is the Hungarian form of “Pavol”) who arrived at the port of New York in February of that year, in the company of 42-year-old Jan Tomko. Both were from Štrba, and both were on their way to join “Janos Huska, at Beaver [Avenue] 2436, Allegheny, PA.” This person was “friend” to Jan Tomko and stepfather to Pal. Pal had never been in the U.S. before, but Jan had—from 1894 to 1900, in Sharon, PA. This Jan Tomko was married, and we think he was Pal’s uncle, the Jan Tomko who was born in 1857, son of Mateg, and husband of Zuzana Huska. Alternatively, it’s possible, but less likely, that he was the Jan Tomko who was born in 1856, son of Michal, and first cousin of Pal’s father. We don’t know

who “Janos Huska” was, nor do we know how he may have been “stepfather” to Pal. <sup>e40,e41</sup>

Jan went back to Štrba in 1906, perhaps just after his father died, probably to head the family and to keep the farm going while Pavol earned the ship fare for them all. <sup>e42</sup>

Michal left for America six months after his father died, arriving at the port of New York on 8 Dec. 1906. His name is given as “Mihály Tomko” on the ship’s passenger list (“Mihály” is the Hungarian form of “Michal”); his age was 14, and he was traveling with 35-year-old Ján Daniel (his Aunt Zsofia’s husband). They were both farm laborers from Štrba, and they were both headed for Braddock, PA. Michal was going there to join “brother, Paul Tomko, 1228 Braddock, Pa,” and Jan was going there to join an acquaintance (probably a hiring agent). This was Michal’s first time in the U.S. He was 4' 10" tall (at age 14), with blond hair and blue eyes. Both Mihály Tomko and Ján Daniel were stamped “Non Immigrant Alien” (it was undoubtedly Jan’s idea for them to declare themselves as such, to avoid “head tax”), and both were also stamped “Admitted.” <sup>e43</sup>

Alzbeta and her daughters came to America a year after Pavol Sr. died. “Beta Huska Tomko” (a widow), with daughters Anna and Maria arrived at the port of New York on 18 June 1907. Beta was 39, Anna was 18, and Maria was 2. The occupation given for Beta and Anna was “maid / serv.” Beta herself paid the passage fare, and they were headed for 6616 St. Clair Street, Cleveland, Ohio, to join Beta’s “sons Paul + Majk Tomko.” None had ever been in the United States before. Beta was 5' 1" tall, with gray eyes; Anna was 5' 3" with blue eyes; and Maria had blue eyes. All were of fair complexion with blond hair. And Alzbeta and Maria returned to Štrba the following year, 1908. <sup>e44</sup>

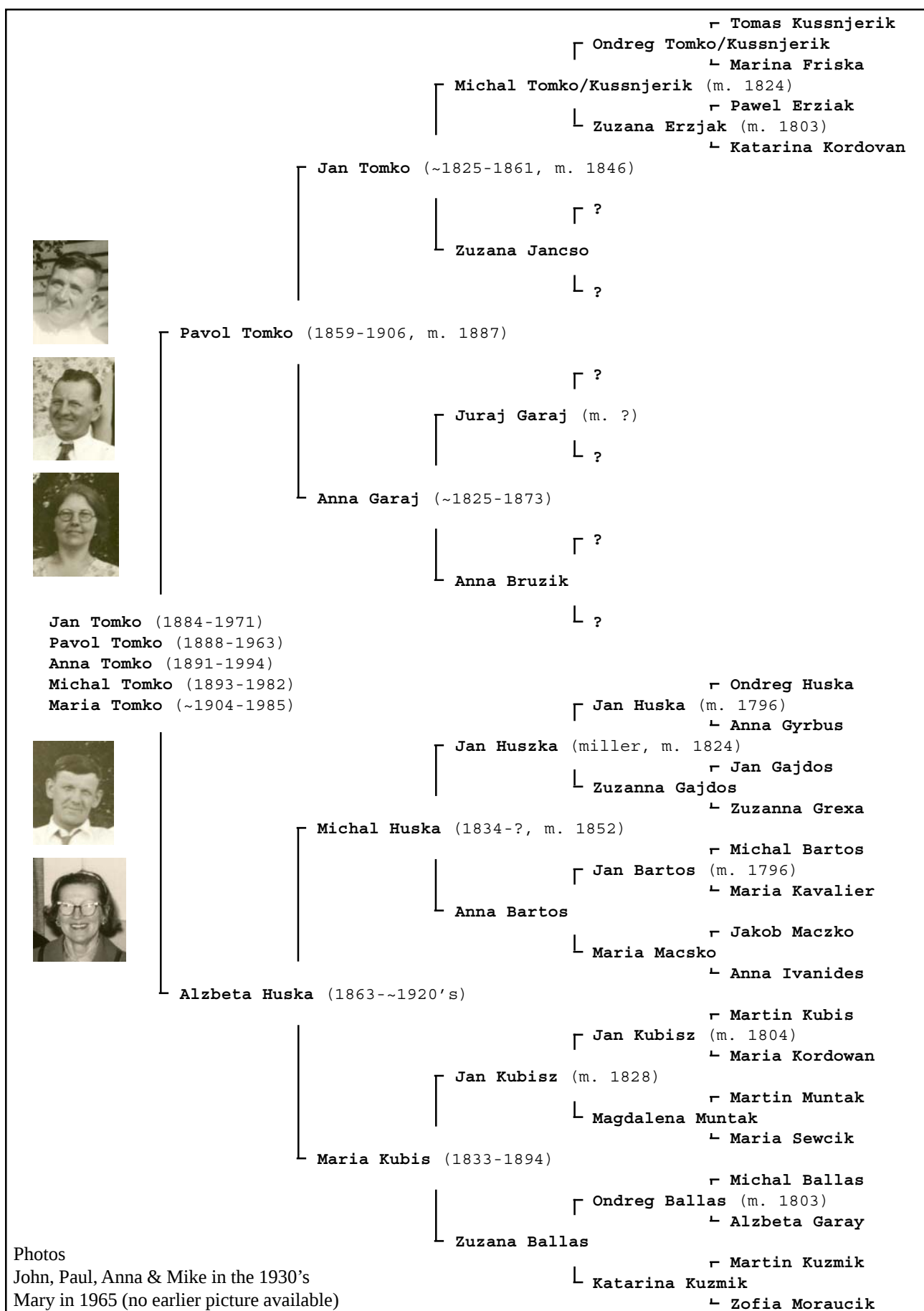
Jan arrived in New York for the second time in November of 1909. This time he gave his name as “János Kubisz-Tomko.” He was 24, and traveling with János Kucsera, 29. Both were farm laborers from Štrba, and both were heading to join Jan’s brother “Paul Tomko” at 11074 East 79th Street in Cleveland. Jan declared that his nearest relative back home was his mother “Beta Tomko,” of Štrba. Jan also declared that he had been in the U.S. before, from 1902 to 1906, in Allegheny, PA (we think his memory was faulty with regard to “1902”). Jan used the surname “Tomko” for the rest of his life. We believe he used the surname “Kubisz-Tomko” for this voyage because his name was recorded as “Kubis” in his baptism record, and he meant to make sure that everything was in order in

### **The Tomko “Five Cousins” Family Tree**

That’s the family tree for The Five Cousins on the opposite page, as well as we know it. We weren’t actually trying to trace it—it just came along with the research results that we’d requested concerning the ancestry of the children of Jan Tomko and Zuzanna Huska. Mostly, it came because the ancestry is similar (the mothers were sisters); but partly it came because we were trying to determine whether or not it was also true that the fathers were brothers, and we have learned that they were not. We happened to be given just enough information in the process to connect what we learned of Pavol Tomko’s ancestry to the earliest part of the Tomko line for children of Jan Tomko and Zuzanna Huska.

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The lower half of this tree is based on Lutheran Štrba parish records on microfilm in the Slovakian National Archives for Bytča District (Štátny archív v Bytči), searched for us by the Institute for Historical Family Research (IHFF Genealogie Gesellschaft mbH, Vienna, Austria; [www.ihff.at](http://www.ihff.at)). The upper half is based on research performed for us directly by Štátny archív v Bytči. <sup>e04,e31,e02</sup>



case someone checked that record (which someone likely did). It may have been that this same problem hampered the progress of his paperwork when he made his first trip, and Jan himself could have caused the note to be written beneath his baptism record, as part of a plan to smooth the way this second time.<sup>e42</sup>

Alzbeta and Maria again arrived in New York in September of 1910, with four others from Štrba—Anna Hladon and her two young children, and Anna Kazar. “Betta Tomko” (no “Huska” this time) named her sister Zsophia Daniel, of Štrba, as her nearest relative back home. She and Maria were coming to join her son Paul Tomko at 882 N.E. 75th Street in Cleveland. They had been in the U.S. before, from 1907 to 1908, and Maria was declared “U.S. born” (which must have been the result of a misunderstanding). Again Alzbeta did not stay in the U.S. long, for she and Maria arrived in New York a third time in December of 1912, with Zsafia. “Erzebet Tomko” (her Hungarian name) was this time joining her son John Tomko at 958 East 70th St. in Cleveland. Alzbeta, still a widow, gave her age as 40, and Maria was a seasoned trans-Atlantic crosser at age eight. As her nearest relative back home, Alzbeta gave the name “son Janos Bartos, Csorba.” There was an extraneous note in Alzbeta’s record—“4 sons”—which is something she must have mentioned incidentally, something which was duly recorded. “Zsafia Daniel,” housewife, age 35 (she was actually 38), 4’ 11” tall with blond hair and gray eyes, was headed for Sharpsville, PA, to join husband “Janos Daniel.” As her nearest relative back home Zsafia gave the name of her niece, Anna Bartos. Zsafia had been in the U.S. before, from 1897 to 1904, in Braddock, PA. We do not know who Jan and Anna Bartos were.<sup>e45,e46</sup>

Zsafia, like Alzbeta, made multiple trips to and from America. We don’t know why they did so, and we don’t know why they waited until December of 1912 to come to stay; but we also don’t know when their father, Michal Huska, died; and this may have been the deciding factor.

In America Alzbeta’s children automatically became “John,” “Paul,” Anna, “Michael,” and “Mary.” Michael usually went by his nickname, “Mike.” Alzbeta became “Elizabeth,” also known as “Aunt Beta,” and Zsafia was always known as “Antie Daniel” to her sisters’ children and grandchildren. Zsafia had no children of her own, as far as we know.<sup>12,7,8,10</sup>

We’re going to leave the story of The Five Cousins temporarily, so that we can finish telling the story of Zsafia.

### **Zsafia Huska and Jan Daniel**

Zsafia Huska, as mentioned previously, married Jan Daniel in Štrba about 1894 or 1895. Jan was born in Štrba in 1870. In May of 1897, in their mid-twenties, they sailed to America. Jan had likely accepted an immigrant labor job at a steel mill in Braddock, PA.\* They may have stayed no longer than the period for which he had signed up, since apparently Jan arrived in New York again in No-

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\* The steel mill at Braddock (about seven miles southeast of Pittsburgh) was the Edgar Thomson Steel Works, owned by Carnegie Steel. It was the first Bessemer plant in the U.S., and it started producing steel in 1875. In 1892, as a result of the “Homestead Strike” at a Carnegie plant in Homestead, PA, Carnegie Steel immediately began replacing union labor with non-union immigrant workers, mostly “Hungarian” (which includes Slovakian). The work was dangerous. On 23 Aug. 1895 sixteen men were badly burned (eight died) when a furnace at the Thomson Works exploded. All of the dead, and all but one (the foreman) of the injured, were “Hungarians.”<sup>e51,e52</sup>

vember of 1901. He, age 28, and Pal Garay, also from Štrba, were headed for Sharon, PA. Jan was going there to join his cousin Jan Kalubka. And Zsafia appears to have sailed into New York again in January of 1902. She, age 26, and three others with her—Michal Daniel, Anna Bruzsik and Jan Huszka, ages 17, 18 and 16, all from Štrba—were all on their way to join Sofia’s husband, “Johann Daniel,” at 112 Albert Avenue in Newark, NJ. “Johann” was Michal’s brother, Anna’s cousin, and Jan Huszka’s uncle. Zsafia and Jan returned to Štrba in 1904. <sup>e47-e50</sup>

Jan arrived back at the port of New York on 8 Dec. 1906, as mentioned above, with his nephew Michal Tomko. Jan was 5' 7" tall, with blond hair and brown eyes. We think this “Jan Daniel” was Zsafia’s husband because he declared that he had been in the U.S. before, from 1896 to 1904, in Braddock, PA. There was another Jan Daniel from Štrba who apparently arrived at the port of New York three days later. This “Janos Daniel” was 31, traveling with his cousin “Pal Daniel,” 18, and both of them were farm laborers from Štrba. This Jan Daniel had been in the U.S. before too, from 1902 to 1904 in Sharon, PA, where he was again headed, to join an acquaintance. Pal, who had never been to the U.S. before, was here to join his uncle, Jan Chalupka, in Sharon. The second Jan Daniel was also 5' 7" tall, with brown eyes. His hair color was either blond or black (it’s hard to read), and he was pock-marked. It’s actually likely that the two Jan Daniels were the same person. Jan may have been planning to accompany Pal, but upon meeting Michal at Bremen decided that it would be better if he accompanied him, since he was younger. Jan would have had no trouble inventing the name of a person in Braddock whom he planned to join, since he had been in Braddock not long before. Normally in this case his name would have been crossed out on one of the passenger lists, but there could have been an oversight. In any case Zsafia’s husband Jan would soon end up in the Sharon area. And if he was the one who came with Michal, but intended to go to Sharon, he probably escorted Michal to Braddock first, since Michal was young and new to America, and he would not yet have been able to speak or read English. <sup>e43,e53</sup>

In 1910, at the time of the federal census, John Daniel (Zsafia’s husband, we believe), age 38, was in Sharon, a laborer at National Malleable, boarding with the John and Mary Michalko family at 25 Philip Street (now Philips Way). Paul Daniel, 22, and John Chalupka, 27 were boarding next door, working as laborers at a furnace. By December of 1912, when Zsafia joined him, Jan was three and a half miles northeast, in Sharpsville. In 1920 they were renting at 240 High Street in Sharpsville, and John was a laborer at a foundry. In 1930 they were still renting at that address, and John was a chipper at a steel mill. John died sometime later that year. We have a picture of his tombstone with the inscription “Daniels [*sic*] / John D., 1870 – 1930; Sophie D., 1874 – 19\_\_”, but we don’t know the location of the cemetery. Sophie would live to become a venerated matriarchal figure to the children of Jan and Zuzana Tomko, and to those of Pavel and Alzbeta Tomko, and to those children’s children. <sup>e54-e57,12,7,8,10</sup>

Antie Daniel did not speak English when she didn’t have to, and so she barely learned it. She lived in a Slovakian community, she went to a Slovakian church, she shopped at stores owned and run by Slovaks, and she felt that she got by very well without having to know English. Her neighborhood in Sharpsville was rough enough when she moved there, and it grew rougher. Mildred Fann Schmidt recalls visiting Antie Daniel there for a day or so in the mid-1930’s, on her way back from visiting the Tomko cousins in Cleveland. As Antie Daniel was walking Mildred to her house, Mildred noticed a tough-looking black man sitting on the steps next-door, and she gave him a nervous look as she passed. Antie Daniel noticed all of this, and said in Slovak, “Show the man your hand, Milka!” as she herself waved and smiled. Mildred waved, and managed a smile, and the man

smiled back, greeting Antie Daniel and her guest. Antie Daniel was deeply religious, and seemed to have an inner calm. She took everything in stride—she let nothing bother her.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Five Cousins (continued)**

Around 1912 John Tomko married Mary Hovanec, who was born around 1895, probably in present-day Slovakia (this is from later U.S. Census information—she was born in Czechoslovakia and her mother tongue was Slovak). She emigrated to America around the turn of the century. Their only son John K. was born around 1913. When John registered for the World War I civilian draft in September of 1918 they were living at 397 Arbor Road in Cleveland, and John was a pattern maker at the American Steel & Wire Company. He and Mary and John K. continued to live at that address, and John continued to have that same job, until at least 1930. John and Mary owned their house and took in boarders to supplement John's income.<sup>e58-e62</sup>

In 1908 or 1909 Paul Tomko married Anna Beres, and in April of 1910 he and she were living in the household of her parents, John and Elizabeth Beres, at 882 East 75th Street in Cleveland (which is the address to which Paul's mother and sisters came, later in 1910, to join him). Anna and her parents were born in "Aust. Hungaria" (as was Paul), and they all had immigrated in 1902. Anna and Paul both spoke English; they had no children; and Paul worked as a cooper (a barrel-maker) in a shop. By June of 1917, when he registered for the WWI draft, Paul and Anna were renting a room, or rooms, at the home of Rose Julke at 1056 East 68th Street in Cleveland. Curiously, Paul signed his name "Paul Tompko" on the registration form. He was 29, and he worked as a "Shopwright 13" at the American Steel and Wire Company. By 1920, at the time of the federal census, Paul and Anna were living at the same place; they again had no children; and Paul worked as a "Chair Maker" at a "Wood f[actory]." <sup>e63-e65</sup>

Sometime around 1912 Anna Tomko married Ludavit ("Louie") Miklovic, who was born in December, 1885, in some place which was part of Yugoslavia up to 1992. They both became naturalized U.S. citizens in 1914. In September of 1918, when Louie registered for the WWI civilian draft, he and Anna were living at 712 East 115th St. in Cleveland, and Louie worked as a tailor for the Grenstein Company, on the 10th floor of the Guardian Building in Cleveland. <sup>e66,e67</sup>

In June of 1917, when Michael Tomko registered for the WWI civilian draft, he was 24 years old, single and living in Littlewood, in Orange County, FL, and farming for C. A. Janes (or Jones) of Littlewood. He raised oranges, we've been told. According to the description on his draft card, Michael was tall and slender, with gray eyes and light brown hair. He enlisted in the National Army<sup>†</sup> on 27 June 1918, in Cleveland, where he was living at Paul's address. Upon enlistment he was automatically granted U.S. citizenship. Michael served in 20<sup>th</sup> Company, 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 158<sup>th</sup> Depot Brigade up to 24 Oct. 1918, and then in Company I (or 1), 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Gas Regiment to the time of his honorable discharge, on 16 Dec. 1918. He attained the rank of sergeant. <sup>e68,12,e69</sup>

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<sup>†</sup> The National Army was the combined conscript and volunteer force that was formed by the United States War Department in 1917 to fight in World War I. The National Army was formed from the old corps of the United States Army, augmented by units of the United States National Guard and a large draft of able-bodied males. At its height there were over two million men in its ranks. It was disbanded in 1920. <sup>e70</sup>

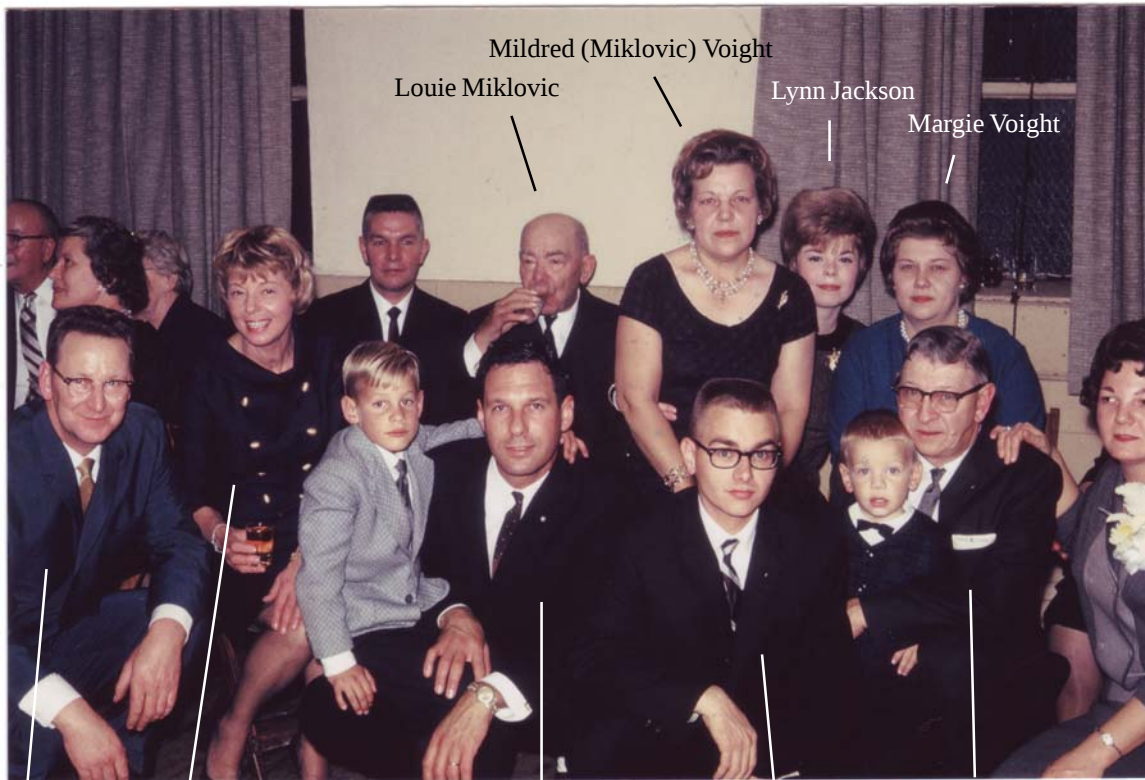
In February of 1920 Michael Tomko, Elizabeth (his mother), and his sister Maria were all living with Louie and Anna Miklovic at 712 East 115th St. Louie and Anna owned the house (they didn't rent), and they had two daughters, Theresa, age 6, and Mildred, age  $5^{10}/_{12}$  (so it appears). Elizabeth was 55 years old at this time; and this is the last we know of her. Louie was a tailor at a men's clothing store, and Michael was an inspector for an auto-motors company. In 1930 Louie ("Ludavit") and Anna Miklovic, with daughters Theresa, 17, and Mildred, 15, still lived at 712 East 115th St., and Louie was a tailor at a retail department store. <sup>e71,e72</sup>

Because Mary Tomko did not stay in Cleveland she did not maintain as close a relationship with her brothers and her sister as they did with each other. She married two or three times, and her last husband's name was Jack Jones, and she and he lived in Youngstown, Ohio. <sup>12</sup>

We don't know what ended Paul's marriage with Anna Beres, but we do know that Paul spent some years in the 1920's in Galveston, Texas. By 1930 he was back in Cleveland, married to Amelia (nee Bozic) Muzar, whom he probably met in Galveston. Amelia was born around 1883 in Croatia, and emigrated to the U.S. around 1892. She too had been married before, to Mathias Muzar, who too was Croatian. They had children named Amelia, Philip, Mathias, Julia, John and Paul Muzar, born between 1904 and 1917, all in Galveston, probably. In Cleveland Paul and Amelia lived at 11515 Shadeland Avenue, with Paul's brother Michael and his family. In 1926 or 1927 Michael had married Ada Louise Hunt, who was born 22 Oct. 1894, in Canada. By April of 1930 they had a son, Donald Ray, of age  $1^{11}/_{12}$  (a daughter, Jo Ann, was born in the 1930's). Michael worked as a metallurgist. Paul adopted Amelia's youngest son, Paul Muzar, who was born in 1917, and who took the name "Paul Tomko, Jr." By 1930 Paul and Amelia were both naturalized U.S. citizens, and Paul worked as a metallurgist for a steel and wire factory. Mike and family and Paul and family lived together at 11515 Shadeland Avenue for many years. <sup>12,e73-e78</sup>

We don't know when or where Alzbeta Huska Tomko died. We cannot find her in the 1930 federal census, and no one alive today remembers ever having met her. We can find no record of her death in the Cleveland area, but still it appears likely that she died sometime in the 1920's, and probably at Anna's house. With this we bring our story of The Five Cousins to a close. <sup>e79</sup>

At Donald Ray Tomko's wedding in 1965, at the Slovene Home, in Cleveland



Francis Schaffer  
Therese (Miklovic) Jackson

cousin Gary

Sam Leslie

Elmer Voight



Jo Ann (Tomko) Schaffer

Mary (Tomko) and Jack Jones

Mike Tomko

## References

### Abbreviations:

**Ancestry.com** = www.ancestry.com, Provo, UT, Online database.

**EllisIsland** = Ellis Island Ship Passenger Records (www.ellisland.org). This site has available some powerful search engines developed by Dr. Stephen P. Morse and collaborators. (Many other databases are accessible via Steve Morse search engines at <http://stevemorse.org>.)

**Greene Co. L.R.** = Greene Co. Courthouse Clerk's Office, 446 Main St., Catskill, NY; Land Records.

**HrabušiceParish** = The combined (baptisms/marriages/burials) register of the Hrabušice parish (with its affiliated church in Betlanovce) of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia (researched for us by *SlovakiaArchives–Levoča*).

**IHFF** = Institute for Historical Family Research (IHFF Genealogie Gesellschaft mbH, Vienna, Austria; [www.ihff.at](http://www.ihff.at)). IHFF performed research for us at *SlovakiaArchives–Bytča*.

**NARA** = National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

**LDS FHL** = The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Family History Library, available via LDS Family History Centers worldwide.

**NY Passenger Lists** = New York Passenger Lists, 1897-1957, NARA microfilm series T715, digitized and available on-line through *Ancestry.com*. Many of these records were located used the search engines at the Ellis Island web site (see *EllisIsland*).

**PopradRegOfc** = City of Poprad (Slovakia) Registry Office (Mesto Poprad Matričný Úrad). These records were obtained for us by Daniel Jochman, of Iliasovce, and electronically sent to us by Luboslav Jochman, of Košice.

**SlovakiaArchives–Bytča** = Štátny archív v Bytči, the Slovakia National Archives branch for the Žilina region.

**SlovakiaArchives–Levoča** = Štátny archív v Levoči, the Slovakia National Archives branch for the Prešov region.

**SmižanyParish** = The combined (baptisms/marriages/burials) register of the Smižany parish (with its affiliated church in Iliášovce) of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia (researched for us by *SlovakiaArchives–Levoča*).

**SSDI** = Social Security Death Index, accessible from [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) and many other websites.

**SSN-App** = Social Security Account Number Application, obtained from the Social Security Administration under the Freedom of Information Act.

**ŠtrbaParish** = The registers of the Štrba parish of the Evangelical a. c. Church (the Lutheran Church) in Slovakia (researched for us by *IHFF*).

**ŠtrbaParish2** = The registers of the Štrba parish of the Evangelical a. c. Church (the Lutheran Church) in Slovakia (copies provided to us in 2008 by *SlovakiaArchives–Bytča*).

**ŠtrbaRegOfc** = Town of Štrba (Slovakia) Registry Office (Obec Štrba Matričný Úrad). These records were obtained for us by Daniel Jochman, and electronically sent to us by Luboslav Jochman.

**US Census nnnn** = United States Census for the year “nnnn”, from a number of NARA microfilm series, digitized and available on-line through *Ancestry.com*.

**WWI Draft Reg.** = NARA, World War I Selective Service System Draft Cards, 1917-1918, Series M1509. The microfilm roll numbers are FHL numbers, followed by NARA microfilm roll numbers in parentheses.

**WWII US Army Enlistment Records** = NARA. U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, (*Ancestry.com* database on-line). Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2005. Original data: Electronic Army Serial Number Merged File, 1938-1946 [Archival Database]; World War II Army Enlistment Records; Records of NARA, Record Group 64; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

**Global References (all chapters):** *Single- and double-digit reference numbers are used to refer to the following people, who have contributed reminiscences and information by personal interviews, phone interviews, letters or email:*

1. Judith Gurka Bensch
2. James Joseph Gurka
3. Robert John Gurka
4. Barbara Gurka Clark (my personal reminiscences)
5. David Irving Gurka (from a 1994 manuscript—see below)
6. Esther Gurka Remsen
7. Mildred Fann Schmidt
8. John Daniel Fann.
9. June Schumacher Fann.
10. Lillian Czenkner Reinke.

11. Carol Ludrovsky Maichrye.
12. Donald Ray Tomko.
13. Joseph Poliacik (son of John).
14. Susan Barger Zbell
15. Arthur J. Barger
16. Sharon Ann Kunay

**David Gurka's 1994 manuscript:** David I. Gurka, who died in 1998, has contributed a great deal of Gurka family history information via a six page manuscript on the subject which he wrote in 1994, just after his son died, intending the information for his daughters. The manuscript is based both on his own knowledge and that of Evelyn Yohman Barger, whom David had interviewed in 1991. Some of the information may also be based on interviews of his mother. The manuscript was sent by David's wife Deanna in 2002 to David's sister Esther Gurka Remsen, who provided us a copy.

## Introduction

- i1. *Hungarian Americans and Their Communities of Cleveland*, by Susan M. Papp, 1981; web edition courtesy of Cleveland State University (<http://clevelandmemory.org/Hungarians/index.htm>). The excerpts collected here are all from section II (Hungarians in America) sub-section III (The Great Immigration: 1870-1920), pp. 102-128. Ms. Papp's sources, denoted by references in brackets, were omitted in the web version of her book.
- i2. *ibid.*, pp. 102-104.
- i3. *ibid.*, p. 105.
- i4. *ibid.*, p. 106.
- i5. *ibid.*, p. 108.
- i6. *ibid.*, p. 109.
- i7. *ibid.*, pp. 110-111.
- i8. *ibid.*, p. 111.

## Chapter 1

101. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 175, no. 26, Susanna Tomko.
102. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 81, no. 10, Johanes Tomko.
103. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 94, no. 16, Susana Huska.
104. *ŠtrbaParish2*: marriages, vol. IV, p. 116, no. 5, Johànes Tomko and Susanna Húska.
105. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 189, no. 39, Johanes Tomko; vol. III, p. 11, no. 47, Maria Tomko; vol. III, p. 24, no. 16, Anna Tomko; vol. III, p. 36, no. 34, Zsafia Tomko.
106. Birth certificate, Pavol Tomko; *StrbaRegOfc*; vol. 1, year 1901, p. 338, no. 14.

In addition, we were provided with a second source for the birthdates of the Tomko children; and in all cases, the dates match. This second source was information which was included in a letter from Sofie Tomko Fann to her daughter Mildred Fann Schmidt, sent sometime in the late 1970's. Sophie wrote the letter to pass on to Mildred birth, marriage and death dates that she had copied from her sister Maria Poliacik's Tomko family Slovak Bible. Maria brought the Bible with her when she came to America in 1907.
107. Information provided by John D. Fann, who visited Slovakia in 1994. A cousin on his father's side, Bohumil Bugale, of Zilina, Slovakia, guided John and his wife June to Bratislava, Štrba and Kolárovice, finding and introducing to John relatives who showed him and June places of interest.
108. High Tatras (<http://tatry.viasalus.sk/strbskepleso/index-eng.htm>), and Spectacular Slovakia: Štrbské Pleso ([http://travel.spectator.sk/ss2001/strbske\\_pleso.html](http://travel.spectator.sk/ss2001/strbske_pleso.html)), 2006.
109. These are family stories that John D. Fann recalls hearing from his mother, Sophie Tomko Fann. John's wife June too recalls hearing the story of Zuzanna (Huska) Tomko suffering from goiter and throwing herself down a well. June heard it many times, both from her mother-in-law and at extended Tomko family get-togethers. June recalls hearing from her husband long ago the story of Jan Tomko remarrying after Zuzanna (Huska) Tomko's death (a story that has been proved true), and that his daughters went to America because they did not get along with their step-mother.
110. *NY Passenger Lists*: Jan Tomko arrived 20 Feb. 1903 on "Kronprinz Wilhelm," p. 158, line 20 (with Pal Tomko, line 21).
111. *NY Passenger Lists*: Janos Tomko arrived 5 Dec. 1894 on "Noordland," steerage passenger no. 75.
112. Death certificate, Zuzana (Húska) Tomko; *StrbaRegOfc*; vol. 1, year 1903, p. 383, no. 46.
113. Marriage certificate, Ján Tomko and Zuzana Otčenás nee Dusík; *StrbaRegOfc*; vol. 1, year 1906, p. 317, no. 8.
114. *NY Passenger Lists*: Zuzanna Tomko et al. arrived 15 Feb. 1907 on "Main" from Bremen, p. 34 (list 27), lines 2-5.

115. *NY Passenger Lists*: Mery Tomko arrived 23 Nov. 1907 on “Baltic” from Liverpool, p. 211, line 12, and p. 240, no. 40.
116. *NY Passenger Lists*: Anna and Zsafia Tomko arrived 26 Apr. 1908 on “President Grant” from Hamburg, p. 175, lines 13, 14, and p. 191, no. 11.
117. *US Census 1930*: Torrington City, Litchfield Co., CT, E.D. 3-29, sheet 7B, line 55: Jan Misura.
118. *NY Passenger Lists*: Zsafia Jakubcsiak et al. arrived 4/25/1908 on “President Grant” from Hamburg, p. 173, lines 21-23.
119. *US Census 1910*: Greenwich Town, Fairfield Co., CT, E.D. 79, sheet 14B, line 78: John Poletchick.
120. WWII Draft Registration Cards, 1942: John Poliacik, b. 13 Aug. 1884, mic. roll WWII\_2383024. (*Ancestry.com*)
121. *US Census 1910*: Manhattan Borough, NYC, NY Co., NY, Ward 12, E.D. 537, sheet 4B, line 66: Joseph Hechko (including sister-in-law Sophie Domko, age 15).
122. *US Census 1910*: Borough of Manhattan, NY City, NY Co., NY, E.D. 631, sheet 3A, line 6: Abraham Stopper.
123. *US Census 1910*: Cleveland township, Cuyahoga Co., OH, E.D. 342, sheet 14B, line 61: Oscar Eiler.
124. Death certificate, Ján Tomko; StrbaRegOfc; vol. 3, year 1919, p. 74, no. 12.
125. Using the Ellis Island search engine, a search for Hungarian/Austrian/Slovak immigrants of any name who came from “Csorba” (the Hungarian name for “Štrba”) produced 383 hits, about 44 of whom appear to be “repeat immigrants.”

## Chapter 2

201. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1786973, Draft Board 169, Manhattan, NY, NY: Joseph Hechko.
202. Birth certificate, Rudolf Hechko, NYC Dept. of Health, Cert. No. 14038, b. 16 Mar. 1905.
203. Marriage certificate, Joseph Hechko and Marie Petruvka, NYC Dept. of Health, Cert. No. 8283, m. 26 Apr. 1903.
204. *US Census 1910*: Manhattan Borough, NYC, NY Co., NY, Ward 12, E.D. 537, sheet 4B, line 66: Joseph Hechko.
205. Marriage certificate, Joseph Hechko and Susie Tomko, NYC Dept. of Health, Cert. No. 5023, m. 14 Feb. 1910.
206. Death certificate, Mary Hechko, NYC Dept. of Health, Cert. No. 35530, d. 8 Dec. 1909.
207. *NY Passenger Lists*: Maria Petrufka arrived 22 Dec. 1900 on “H. H. Meier,” mic. roll T715\_165, page 49, line 13, .
208. Birth certificate, Joseph Hechko, City of NY, State of NY, Cert. No. 47064, b. 25 Oct. 1903. (Maria Petrouka(?))
209. New York Petitions for Naturalization, Vol. 135, Record 183, Joseph Hechko, (*Ancestry.com*)
210. New York City city directories, usually published by R. L. Polk & Co., or Trow, 1897-1898 to 1933-1934, on microfilm at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
211. *New York Passenger Lists*: Charles Hechko (indexed as “Hecksco”) arrived 30 Dec. 1905 on “Graf Waldersee,” mic. roll T715\_653, p. 8, line 12.
212. *US Census 1910*: Manhattan Borough, NYC, NY Co., NY, Ward 1, E.D. 3, sheet 6A, line 116: Frank Hechko.
213. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1754439, Draft Board 1, Somerville, Somerset Co., NJ: John Policik.
214. *US Census 1910*: Greenwich Town, Fairfield Co., CT, E.D. 79, sheet 14B, line 78: John Poletchick.
215. *US Census 1920*: Somerville City, Somerset Co., NJ, E.D. 141, sheet 18A, line 16: John Poliacub.
216. *US Census 1930*: Somerville, Somerset Co. NJ, E.D. 18-46, sheet 1B, line 97: John Poliacik.
217. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1832068, Draft Board 1, West Park, Cuyahoga Co., OH: Steve Kobezda.
218. *US Census 1920*: West Park Township, Cuyahoga Co. OH, E.D. 604, sheet 13B, line 97: Stephen Kobezda.
219. Marriage certificate, John Fano / Sophia Tomko, m. 2/17/1917, Manhattan, NYC, NY; State of New York, The City of New York, Dept. of Health, cert. no. 6136.
220. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1766348, Draft Board 133, Manhattan, NY, NY: John Fano.
221. *The New Century Dictionary*, edited by H. G. Emery and K. G. Brewster, D. Appleton-Century Company, New York, 1946 (1st copyright in 1927, The Century Company).
222. *US Census 1920*: Manhattan, NYC, NY Co., NY, Ward 19 “A.D.”?, ED 1321, sheet 13B, line 64: John Fano.
223. WWII Draft Registration Cards, 1942: Daniel Fano, born 13 June 1890, mic. roll WW2\_2283701 (*Ancestry.com*).
224. *NY Passenger Lists*: Janos Fano arrived 18 Dec. 1913 on “Main,” p. 74, line 16. Listed on passenger list and in *Ancestry.com* index as “Fanos Tano” (the pursor crossed the J instead of the F).
225. *NY Passenger Lists*: Karolina Fano and son Daniel arrived 3 July 1925 on “Berengaria,” p. 155, lines 4-5.
226. Boston Passenger Lists: Daniel Fano arrived 12 Feb. 1921, on “Mount Clay,” p. 20, line 9. (*Ancestry.com*)
227. *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller — Worlds to Conquer, 1908-1958*, by Cary Reich, Doubleday, NY, 1996.
228. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 244, p. 269: Susan Hechko bought farm #1 in Greene Co.
229. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 252. p. 448: Susan Hechko sold farm #1 in Greene Co.
230. *NY Passenger Lists*: Lajos Czenkner arrived 8 June 1912 on “Prinz Friedrich Wilhelm,” page 74, line 24.
231. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1831776, Draft Board 12, Cleveland, Cuyahoga Co., OH: Louis Czenkner.
232. *NY Passenger Lists*: Louis Czenkner & family arrived 11 Nov. 1923 on Manchuria, page 32, lines 15-17; and p. 76

- (Record of Detained Aliens), no. 46.
233. Wikipedia ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)): Romania, Timiș county.
234. *US Census 1930*: Cleveland, Ward 33, Cuyahoga Co., OH, E.D. 18-284, sheet 19B, line 72: Louis Czenkner.
235. *US Census 1930*: Cleveland, Ward 33, Cuyahoga Co., OH, E.D. 18-747, sheet 5A, line 32, Stephen Kobezda.
236. National Archives of Australia, Series B78, Item: CZECHSLOVAKIAN / TOMKO PAUL (Item No. 5930597, Accession No. 2004/00236373), Title: TOMKO, Paul; Two items, actually—an Application for [Alien] Registration and a Certificate of [Alien] Registration, both dating from 1948.
237. *US Census 1930*: Brooklyn Borough, Kings Co., NY, ED 24-504?, sheet 9A, line 42: Joseph Hecker.
238. Marriage certificate, Joseph Hechko (Jr.) and Sadie Cohen, NYC Dept. of Health, Borough of Manhattan, Cert. No. 10658, m. 14 Apr. 1926.
239. Marriage certificate, Frank M. Doyne and Helen Hechko, m. 14 Feb 1927, Bronx, cert. no 918, The City of New York Dept. of Health.
240. *US Census 1930*: New York City, Bronx Co., NY, ED 3-626, sheet 24A, line 4: Frank M. Doyne.
241. *US Census 1930*: New York City, Jamaica A.D. 4, Queens Co., NY, ED 41-1295, sheet 11-B, line 52: John Fano.
242. Picture of Daniels tombstone in collection of Carol Ludrovsky Maichrye. “DANIELS / John D. / 1870 – 1930,” “Sophie D. / 1874 – 19\_\_.” Name and location of cemetery is not known, but John D. Fann remembers being taken to Ohio for the funeral when he was about six years old (1930).
243. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 265, p. 524: Susan Hechko bought back farm #1 in Greene Co., at public auction.
244. *SSN-App*: SSN 090-03-6014, Mildred Suzanne Hechko, 25 Nov. 1936.
245. *SSN-App*: SSN 055-09-0795, Joseph Charles (Fictitious) Hecker, 20 Nov. 1936
246. *SSN-App*: SSN 092-09-6141, Rudolph Hechko, 5 Dec. 1936. The first ‘K’ in his mother’s maiden name, PETRUKKA, is overtyped by some other letter, perhaps an ‘F’.
247. Death certificate, Joseph Hechko, NYC Dept. of Health, Borough of Queens, Cert. No. 5682, d. 7 July 1943.
248. Lakewood Historical Society, Theodor Kundtz—An Online Exhibit (<http://lakewoodhistory.org/kundtz/>).

### Chapter 3

301. From a May 2007 interview (by Richard Clark & Conrad Terrill) of Irving Smith, age 80, of New Baltimore, Greene Co., NY, who lived at the next farm down the road from Susan Hechko’s first farm in the 1930’s and ‘40’s.
302. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 271, p. 435: Susan Hechko purchased water pipe rights for the New Baltimore farm, 14 Apr. 1936.
303. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1642994, Draft Board 0, Crawford Co., OH: Fritz Kummer.
304. *NY Passenger Lists*: Fritz Kummer arrived 7 Oct. 1913 on “Niagara,” page 143, line 19.
305. Marriage certificate, Fred Kummer and Susan Hechko, State of NY Dept. of Health, cert. no. 41991, m. 26 Oct. 1943, Greenville, Greene Co., NY.
306. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1642994, Draft Board 0, Crawford Co., OH: Franz Kummer.
307. *US Census 1900*: Manhattan, NYC, New York Co., NY, E.D. 101, sheet 10, line 70: Emma Minch.
308. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1642994, Draft Board 0, Crawford Co., OH: Ernst Kummer.
309. *NY Passenger Lists*: Ernst Kummer arrived 14 Mar. 1907 on “Nieuw Amsterdam.” p. 74, line 18.
310. *NY Passenger Lists*: Emma Kummer arrived 18 May 1895 on “New York,” p. 9, no. 365.
311. *US Census 1910*: Ward 9, NYC, New York Co., NY, E.D. 159, sheet 5A: Emma Munch.
312. New York City Death Records Index (1891-1948), <http://stevemorse.org/vital/nydeath.php>: Munch, William, d. 2 Apr. 1910, cert. no. 10844, Manhattan, b. 1870-1871.
313. Marriage certificate, Otto Schnare and Emma Munch, NYC Dept. of Health, Cert. No. 22698, m. 25 Sept. 1911.
314. *US Census 1900*: Manhattan, NYC, New York Co., NY, E.D. 101, sheet 9B, line 98: Otto Schnare.
315. *US Census 1910*: Manhattan, NYC, New York Co., NY, E.D. 1008, sheet 3A, line 47: Otto Schnare.
316. *US Census 1920*: Greenville Township, Greene Co., NY, E.D. 62 or 68?, sheet 11A?, line 33: Frank Kummer.
317. *US Census 1930*: Cossachie Town, Greene Co. NY, ED 20-14, sheet 9B, line 73: Emma Schnare (including Fred and Frank Kummer).
318. *US Census 1920*: Union Township, Crawford Co., OH, E.D. 24-30, sheet 5A, line 39: Ernest Kummer.
319. *US Census 1930*: Union Township, Crawford Co., OH, E.D. 87, sheet 1B, line 57: Ernest Kummer.
320. *NY Passenger Lists*: Franz Kummer, arrived 15 Mar. 1914 on “La Lorraine,” p. 113, line 15.
321. *US Census 1920*: Washington Township, Crawford Co., OH, E.D. 88, sheet 5A, line 49: Fred Kummer.
322. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 216, p. 356: Franz Kummer & Emma Schnare bought the farm in New Baltimore, 24 Apr. 1918.
323. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 260, p. 247: Frank Kummer & Emma Schnare bought the farm in New Baltimore again?, 23 Nov. 1931.

324. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 222, p. 61: Frank Kummer & Emma Schnare bought 75 acres in Greenville, 5 May 1919.
325. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 230, p. 464: Frank Kummer & Emma Schnare bought the Gee farm in Coxsackie, 25 Apr. 1922.
326. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 274, p. 130: Frank Kummer & Emma Schnare bought lots in Athens, 101 acres, 8 Mar. 1937.
327. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 318, p. 281: Frank Kummer & Emma Schnare sold the Gee farm in Coxsackie to Alfred & Olive Schnare, 18 Nov. 1949.
328. From a May 2007 interview (by Richard Clark & Conrad Terrill) of a son of Alfred Schnare (who was a son of Emma Schnare), at Schnare's fruit farm off Route 81 in Climax, Greene Co., NY.
329. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 491, p. 1043: Frank Kummer, of New Baltimore, NY, granted Power-Of-Attorney to Paul Preminger, Sr., of Ravena, NY.
330. *SSN-App*: SSN 097-32-9232, Frank Kummer, 29 July 1957.
331. *SSDI*: Frank Kummer, SSN 097-32-9232.
332. *SSN-App*: SSN 083-14-4133, Fred Kummer, 1 Dec. 1939.
333. Death certificate, Joseph Hechko, NYC Dept. of Health, Borough of Queens, Cert. No. 5682, d. 7 July 1943.
334. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 294, p. 314: Susan Hechko Kummer sold the New Baltimore farm, 9 Sept. 1944.
335. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 309, p. 579: Fred & Susan Kummer bought the farm in Greenville, 16 Feb. 1948.
336. Death certificate, Fred Kummer, New York State Dept. of Health, Vital Records Section, Genealogy Unit, Certificate No. 33733, d. 18 May 1961.
337. Tombstone in Greenville Cemetery: Fred Kummer, 1889-1961.
338. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 399, p. 583: Susan Kummer sold the Greenville farm, 5 Feb. 1962.
339. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 405, p. 106: Susan Kummer bought the trailer lot in Coxsackie, 7 May 1962.
340. *Greene Co. L.R.*: Liber 442, p. 431: Susan Kummer sold the trailer lot in Coxsackie, 16 July 1969.
341. Funeral card in the possession of Mildred Schmidt.
342. *SSDI*: Martha Hechko, SSN 128-20-1618.
343. *WWII US Army Enlistment Records*: Stephen J. Poliacik, enlisted 14 Oct. 1942, Newark, NJ.
344. *U.S. Rosters of World War II Dead, 1939-1945* [Ancestry.com database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2007. Original data: United States. Army. Quartermaster General's Office. *Rosters of World War II Dead (all services)*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army. Joe Poliacik, Merchant Marine, Service No. 441887.
345. American Merchant Marine at War, [www.usmm.org](http://www.usmm.org), by the U.S. Maritime Service Veterans. Click on Merchant Mariners killed on U.S. operated ships during World War II, and on U.S. Merchant Ships Sunk or Damaged in World War II. Joe Poliacik, d. 15 Jan. 1945, ship Calvin Coolidge.
346. *WWII US Army Enlistment Records*: Joseph G. Ludrovsky, enlisted 5 Jan. 1944, Cleveland, OH.
347. WWI, WWII, and Korean War Casualty Listings [Ancestry.com database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2005. Original data: American Battle Monuments Commission. World War I Listing; World War II Listing; Korean War Listing. American Battle Monuments Commission. Joseph G. Ludrovsky, d. 25 Nov. 1944, Service ID 35925439.
348. National Archives of Australia, Series B78, Item: CZECHSLOVAKIAN / TOMKO PAUL (Item No. 5930597, Accession No. 2004/00236373), Title: TOMKO, Paul; Two items, actually—an Application for [Alien] Registration and a Certificate of [Alien] Registration, both dating from 1948.
349. Information included in a letter from Sophie Tomko Fann to her daughter Mildred Fann Schmidt, sent sometime in the late 1970's. Sophie wrote the letter to pass on to Mildred birth, marriage and death dates that she had copied from her sister Maria Poliacik's Tomko family Slovak Bible. She wrote that Maria brought the Bible with her when she came to America in 1907.

## Chapter 4

401. Baptism record, Joannes Gurka b. 25 May 1869, Betlanovce, *HrabušiceParish* pp. 80-81.
402. Marriage record, Martinus Gurka and Catharina Macsus, m. 10 May 1869, Betlanovce, *HrabušiceParish* pp. 151-152.
403. Baptism record, Martinus Gurka, bapt. 12 Nov. 1843, *SmižanyParish* p. 270.
405. Burial record, Martin Gurka, d. 28 Aug. 1870, *HrabušiceParish* pp. 184-185.
406. Burial record, Catharina Gurka, Martini uxor (wife of Martin), d. 23 April 1875, *HrabušiceParish* pp. 196-197.
407. Baptism record, Susanna Tomo, b. 21 Apr. 1874, *ŠtrbaParish* vol. -, p. 139. The information on her siblings is from other ŠtrbaParish baptism and death records, examined on our behalf by IHFF.
408. Zuzanna Gurka, for a 1913 ship's passenger manifest, named as her nearest relative in the country from which she came "sister: Tomko, Maria, Csorba, Lipto." (see ref. 423). (Csorba is the Hungarian name for Štrba.)

409. Marriage record, János Gurka and Zsuzsanna Tomo, m. 16 Feb. 1896, Vel'ká, marriage register of the Evangelical a. c. at Vel'ká, no.:952, pp. 154-155.
410. Refs. 403 and 407, plus a number of other records from both *Smižany Parish* and *Štrba Parish* (those upon which the Gurka and Tomo Family Trees are based).
411. Birth certificate, Ján Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1896, p. 15, no. 9.
412. Death certificate, Ján Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1896, p. 19, no. 10.
413. Birth certificate, Zuzana Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1898, p. 100, no. 12.
414. Birth certificate, Ján Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol. 1, year 1901, p. 235, no. 30.
415. *NY Passenger Lists*: Jafnf Gurka arrived 19 Apr. 1902 on "Cassel," list 61, line 26, . (Note: There were five other "Jafnf"'s, and one "Jafnfa," on the same page of the manifest, and there was one "Jan." Why the ship's purser wrote what appears to be "Jafnf" is a mystery.)
416. Borough of Coplay, PA; "About Us, Early History . . ." ([www.boroughofcoplay.org/about.html](http://www.boroughofcoplay.org/about.html)).
417. U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925, Ancestry.com, The Generations Network, Inc., 2007; from General Records of the Dept. of State, Record Group 59, NARA; specifically Passport Applications, January 2, 1906-March 31, 1925; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1490): John Gurka, and Andreg Gurka. (Examined at NARA.)
418. Birth certificate, Martin Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol 2., year 1908, p. 14, no. 50.
419. *NY Passenger Lists*: Janos Gurka arrived 29 Jan. 1909 on "Pannonia," p. 84, line 10, .
420. Philadelphia Passenger Lists (*Ancestry.com*): Suzanna Gorka arrived 25 Dec. 1910 on "Graf Waldersee," NARA mic. series T840, roll 86, list 12, line 27.
421. Westsylvania for Allegheny Travelers: Links: Stories: Coal Mining in Cambria County, PA, <http://www.westsylvania.com/cfm/ccf.cfm?mode=story&id=314>.
422. "The Terrible Disaster at Johnstown," by Gilson Willets, Special Correspondent of *Collier's Weekly* at Johnstown, Pa., *Collier's Weekly*, 26 July 1902, p. 5. (<http://webpages.atlanticbb.net/~DoCoogie/johnstownhistorypages/johnstownhistory1902mine/1902minecolliersweekly5.html>).
423. Baltimore Passenger Lists, 1820-1948, *Ancestry.com*: Zzwanna [sic], Janos and Marton Gurka arrived Apr. 1913 on "Rhein" from Bremen, mic. roll 95, page 300.
424. *NY Passenger Lists*: S.S Main arrived 11 Apr. 1913; p. 172, lines 18, 19, 20, Zuzanna, Janos and Marton Gurka (their names were crossed out).
425. *NY Passenger Lists*: S.S. Barbarossa arrived 24 Apr. 1913; p. 120, lines 5, 6, 7, Zuzanna, Janos and Marton Gurka, (their names were crossed out).
426. Birth certificate, Joseph Gurka b. 12 May 1915; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dept. of Health, Vital Records; Mercer County, file number 2283280-1915, filed 11/9/1925 (filed late).
427. Passport No. 990, Consulate General of the United States of America at Prague, Czechoslovakia, (E 147521), dated 21 Dec. 1934, for Ethel Gurka. (Courtesy of Esther Remsen.)
428. Esther Gurka Remsen told us that her mother, Bertha Tobin Gurka, often said that grandmother Gurka always had a special place in her heart for Joe, because he was born after she was converted.
429. A Slovak Church of God minster named Brother Horevay was a pastor in Johnstown from shortly after 1905 to sometime after 1935. This piece of information is from an article entitled "Beginning of the Work among the Slovak People," by Michael Fabry, in the Jan./Feb./Mar. 1935 issue of *The Pioneer*, A monthly Magazine for Home and Foreign Missions, saved by Martin Gurka and now in the possession of Esther Remsen.
430. *History of the Churches of God in North America*, by S. G. Yahn, D. D., Editor of *The Church Advocate* (Third Edition), Central Publishing, House, Harrisburg, PA, 1926, p. 73 ([www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/believers/yahnhcogna/HCG00A.HTM](http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/believers/yahnhcogna/HCG00A.HTM)).
431. Marriage records, Joseph Yohman and Susan Gurka, Clerk of Courts, Mercer, PA; License no. 16652, m. 20 Nov. 1918.
432. Death certificate, John Gurka, d. 13 Jun. 1920; Commonwealth of Penn., Dept. of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, cert. no. (unreadable).
433. Death certificate, Susanna Yohman, d. 24 Nov. 1922; Commonwealth of Penn., Dept. of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, cert. no. 107266.
434. *US Census 1920*: Sharon City, Mercer Co., PA, E.D. 85, sheet 29B, line 33: John Gurka.
435. *US Census 1920*: Sharon City, Mercer Co., PA, E.D. 85, sheet 30B, line 91: Joseph Yohman.
436. Sharon, Pennsylvania 16146 / History of Sharon, "The History of Sharon: (Part I), 1796-1900," from the Sharon Herald, Monday, 25 Aug. 1945 ([www.cityofsharon.net](http://www.cityofsharon.net)—see the paragraph for 1899).
437. Death certificate, Ján Gurka; *PopradRegOfc*: vol. 3, year 1932, p. 75, no. 31.
438. *NY Passenger Lists*: Joseph Gurka arrived 15 June 1933 on "Manhattan," p. 68, line 4.
439. *NY Passenger Lists*: Zuzanna and Ethel Gurka arrived 6 Jan. 1935 on "Washington," p. 113, lines 17 & 18.
440. Index to Records of Deaths in the Town of Torrington, Conn., 1930 through 1939, Torrington City Hall, Torrington,

CT, Town Clerk's office.

- 441. Death certificate, Susanna Luchansky, Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, OH, File No. 1696, Reg. No. 807, d. 26 Jan. 1943.
- 442. Death certificate, Dorothy Luchansky, Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, OH, File No. 14952, Reg. No. 2787, d. 26 Mar. 1930.
- 443. *US Census 1910*: 4th Ward of Sharon Boro, Mercer Co., PA, ED 179, sheet 31, line 76: Jacob Luchansky.
- 444. *US Census 1920*: Cleveland City, Cuyahoga Co. OH, ED 334, sheet 50, line 74: Jacob Luchansky.
- 445. *US Census 1930*: Cleveland City, Ward 29, Cuyahoga Co. OH, ED 18-506, sheet 3, line 65: Jacob Luchansky.
- 446. Death certificate, Jacob Luchansky, Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, OH, File No. (22110)?, Reg. No. (too faint to read), d. 16 Apr. 1951.
- 447. Assemblies of God USA, Women in Ministry, Women in the pentecostal Movement: (<http://womeninministry.ag.org/history/index.cfm>).
- 448. *Charisma* [magazine], Feb. 2003, an article entitled, "Harlem Church, Born Out of Racism, Forgives Rejection 85 Years Later": (<http://www.charismamag.com/display.php?id=7116>).
- 449. 1869 Hungarian Census, Szepes county, Betlanfalu (Betlanovce), *LDS FHL* microfilm INTL 2162281, item 1 (cont. from item 6 on 2162280). Filmed in 1998 at Štátny archív v Levoči.

## Chapter 5

- 501. Marriage records, Joseph Yohman and Susan Gurka, Clerk of Courts, Mercer, PA; License no. 16652, m. 20 Nov. 1918.
- 502. *NY Passenger Lists*: Josef Jochmann arrived 25 June 1913 on "Kronprinzessin Cecelie" from Hamburg, images 67-68, line 23. ("Juzef Juchmann" in index.)
- 503. *NY Passenger Lists*: Kata Jochmann et al. arrived 1 Aug. 1913 on "Patricia" from Hamburg, images 47-48, lines 12-14; image 133, lines 21-23; and image 138, lines 18-19. ("Kata Jorhmann", "Kota Jachman", and "Kata Jochman" in index).
- 504. Birth certificate (RODNÝ LIST) for Jakub Jochman, b. 7 Jan. 1901, son of Jakub Jochman and Katarina (nee Bong), from Slovenská Republica, February 2007.
- 505. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1831701, Draft Board 4, Cleveland, Cuyahoga Co., OH: Jozef Yohman.
- 506. *US Census 1920*: Sharon City, Mercer Co., PA, E.D. 85, sheet 30B, line 91: Joseph Yohman.
- 507. Death certificate, Susanna Yohman (coming from Barb and Rich), d. 24 Nov. 1922.
- 508. *US Census 1930*: Sharon City, 4th Precinct, Mercer Co., PA, E.D. 43-69, sheet 21A, line 28: Joseph Yohman.
- 509. *NY Passenger Lists*: Jan Barger et al. arrived 28 July 1929 on "Republic" from Bremen, images 31-32, lines 1-2.
- 510. *US Census 1930*: Torrington, Litchfield Co., CT, E.D. 3-32, sheet 1B, line 94: John Barger.
- 511. World-wide web site which refers to the old rustic treadmill in Mengusovce, developed by Peter Bandura as part of his Diploma Thesis at the University of Presov, Slovakia: (<http://ban.host.sk/en/mengusovce.php>).
- 512. *NY Passenger Lists*: Maria Barger & children arrived 28 Aug. 1939 on "Bremen" from Bremen, images 85-86, lines 22-25.
- 513. *Shadow Voyage: The Extraordinary Wartime Escape of the Legendary SS Bremen*, Peter Huchthausen, Wiley, 2005.
- 514. *Time* magazine, 23 Oct. 1939, "Clever Boys," an article on the discovery the week before of the missing luxury liner Bremen, based on an account in an Amsterdam newspaper by a Dutch cook from the ship.
- 515. *Time* magazine, 4 Feb. 1957, Milestones section. One of the obituaries was that of Commodore Adolf Ahrens, German shipmaster who sailed his crack liner Bremen out of New York Harbor. He died at age 78 of a stroke.
- 516. "Bremen, 1929-1941," a short history of the Bremen from The Great Ocean Liners, a web page by Daniel Othfors & Henrik Llungström of Sweden: (<http://www.greatoceanliners.net/bremen.html>).
- 517. "Bremen, North German Lloyd," a short history of the Bremen from The Classic Liners of Long Ago, a web page by Ben Schumin: (<http://ocean-liners.schuminweb.com/ships/bremen.asp>).
- 518. *WWII US Army Enlistment Records*: John Barger, enlisted 30 Jan. 1943, Hartford, CT.
- 519. *WWII US Army Enlistment Records*: Edward Kunay, enlisted 19 Aug. 1940, Hartford, CT.
- 520. *WWII US Army Enlistment Records*: Arthur P. Yohman, enlisted 1 Feb. 1946, Pittsburgh, PA.
- 521. *SSDI*: Joseph Yohman, SSN 211-07-9512.
- 522. "Locals mark Slovak secession," by Robert Cyr, (Torrington) Register Citizen, 2 Jan 2006, with quotes from Susan Zbell: ([http://www.registercitizen.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=15853966&BRD=1652&PAG=461&dept\\_id=12530&rft=6](http://www.registercitizen.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=15853966&BRD=1652&PAG=461&dept_id=12530&rft=6))
- 523. *SSDI*: John Barger (son), SSN: 048-10-4942.
- 524. *SSDI*: Andrew Barger, SSN: 043-22-7962.

## Chapter 6

601. "Beginning of the Work among the Slovak People," an article by Michael Fabry in *The Pioneer (A Monthly Magazine for Home and Foreign Missions)*, Jan., Feb., March, 1935, pp. 5 & 7. Martin Gurka saved this issue of the magazine for this article. (Courtesy of Esther Remsen.)
602. *US Census 1930*: Newark, Ward 16, Essex Co. NJ, E.D. 7-286, sheet 7A, line 48: Martin Gurka.
603. Information provided by Deanna (Mrs. David) Gurka in 2006.
604. Obituaries for Rev. Martin Gurka, cut out from newspapers in the days following his death on 16 June 1967. (Courtesy of Esther Remsen.)
605. *NY Passenger Lists*: Martin Gurka arrived 27 Aug. 1930 on "President Harding," page 123, line 22.
606. *NY Passenger Lists*: Martin Gurka arrived 9 Sept. 1932 on "President Roosevelt," page 85, line 21.
607. Letter from the Office of the President (Homer R. Dunathan), Findlay College, Findlay, Ohio, certifying that Mr. Martin Gurka finished the "Three-year Ministerial Course," dated 11 June 1934. (Courtesy of Esther Remsen.)
608. Christian Union Annual License to Preach, signed by the Ordaining Committee of the North Ohio Annual Council of the Christian Union on 12 March 1934, and valid until 29 Aug. 1934. (Courtesy of Esther Remsen.)
609. Marriage License, Knox Co., Ohio, for Martin Gurka and Bertha Tobin, dated 23 May 1934, good anywhere in the state of Ohio. (Courtesy of Esther Remsen.)
610. *US Census 1930*: Morris Township, Knox Co., OH, E.D. 42-30, sheet 7A, line 6: Charles M. Tobin.
611. Petition for Issuance of Immigration Visa approved under No. V201849, 24 May 1934, issued in connection with Prepaid Ticket No. 8892476 of the United States Lines. By Martin Gurka, for his mother Susanna Gurka. (Courtesy of Esther Remsen.)
612. *NY Passenger Lists*: Zuzanna and Ethel Gurka arrived 6 Jan. 1935 on "Washington," p. 113, lines 17 & 18.
613. Passport No. 990, Consulate General of the United States of America at Prague, Czechoslovakia, (E 147521), dated 21 Dec. 1934, for Ethel Gurka. (Courtesy of Esther Remsen.)
614. Land records, Vol. 131, p. 285 (8 Apr. 1939); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT.
615. Letter to Martin Gurka dated 1 Feb. 1944 from Jack B. Dworken and Morton R. Dworken, Attorneys At Law, Cleveland Ohio. (Courtesy of Esther Remsen.)
616. Land records, Vol. 233, p. 758 (6 Sept. 1963); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT

## Chapter 7

701. *NY Passenger Lists*: Joseph Gurka arrived 15 June 1933 on "Manhattan," page 68, line 4.
702. The fact that Mildred Hechko worked at the Home Insurance Company from 1930 to 1940 comes from a caption that she wrote for a picture (*see p. 7.3*), now (2006) in the possession of her daughter Judith Gurka Bensch. The Home Insurance Company building was in the blocks surrounded by Maiden Lane, William Street and John Street. It was a 14-story high-rise built in 1925 by architect Louis Allen Abramson (his first building), and it has been demolished. [<http://www.emporis.com/en/wm/bu/?id=140570>].
703. *SSN-App*: SSN 090-03-6014, Mildred Suzanne Hechko, 25 Nov. 1936.
704. The Joseph and Mildred Gurka family Bible, now (2006) in the possession of Judith Gurka Bensch.
705. *SSN-App*: SSN 056-10-4000, Joseph Gurka, 18 Nov. 1936.
706. The Graduate Center of CUNY, "The Campus: About the Former B. Altman Department Store Building ...," ([http://www.gc.cuny.edu/about\\_gc/campus/ba\\_department\\_store\\_1.htm](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/about_gc/campus/ba_department_store_1.htm)).
707. *NY Passenger Lists*: Zuzanna and Ethel Gurka arrived 6 Jan. 1935 on "Washington," p. 113, lines 17 & 18, .
708. Land records, Vol. 131, p. 239 (26 Jan. 1939); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Deeded from Clarence H. Nickerson to Joseph & Mildred Gurka, (3 acres at 2734 Tarringford West).
709. Land records, Vol. 134, p. 371 (16 Oct. 1939); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Deeded from Joseph & Mildred Gurka to Lewis Manufacturing Co., of Bay City, Bay Co., Michigan, (the land at 2734 Tarringford West St.), for \$898.20. (the price of the Ready-Cut Home?)
710. "Mail-Order Residences Not Unusual," by Susan M. Greene, Tampa Bay Tribune, 8 Aug. 2004 (<http://brandon.tbo.com/brandon/MGB8PIH9MXD.html>).
711. Land records, Vol. 146, p. 415 (date?); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Joseph Gurka quit-claimed his interest in the property at 2734 Tarringford West St. to Mildred Gurka.
712. Land records, Vol. 149, p. 526 (21 Aug. 1945); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Deeded from Eva M. and Irving G. Bovee to Mildred Susan Gurka (the property on the west side of Winsted Rd., at the corner of Buttrick Rd.)
713. Land records, Vol. 176, p. 80 (21 Feb. 1951); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Deeded from Mildred S. Gurka to James V. Savanella (part of the property on the west side of Winsted Rd., at the corner of

Buttrick Rd.)

714. Land records, Vol. 176, p. 3 (2 Mar. 1951); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Deeded from Mildred S. Gurka to Philip & Clara Laraia (the other part of the property on the west side of Winsted Rd., at the corner of Buttrick Rd.)
715. Land records, Vol. 149, p. 598 (3 Nov. 1945); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Deeded from Andrew Trafidlo to Mildred S. Gurka (the Milk Bar property on Winsted Rd.).
716. Land records, Vol. 165, p. 254 (29 June 1949); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Deeded from Mildred S. Gurka to Morris H. Dolinsky (the Milk Bar property on Winsted Rd.)
717. Land records, Vol. 180, p. 29 (29 May 1952); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Deeded from Mildred S. Gurka to Louis E. & Albert D. DeWitt (the house and property at 2734 Torrington West St.)
718. Land Records, Anne Arundel Co., MD, liber 692, p. 573, Anne Arundel Co. Courthouse, Annapolis: House & property at 1225 Guildford Rd., Harundale [Glen Burnie], deeded to Joseph & Mildred S. Gurka, 30 Jun. 1952.
719. Land Records, Anne Arundel Co., MD, liber 712, p. 398, Anne Arundel Co. Courthouse, Annapolis: House & property at 1225 Guildford Rd., Harundale [Glen Burnie], MD, deeded from Joseph & Mildred S. Gurka, 2 Oct. 1952.
720. Wikipedia (2007): "Maryland Route 2"; "Maryland Route 10"; "Baltimore-Washington Expressway".
721. Land records, Vol. 180, p. 158 (25 Aug. 1952); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Deeded from Edward J. & Thelma M. Nawalaniec to Joseph & Mildred Gurka (the house and property on Lindberg St.)
722. Land records, Vol. 59, p. 233 (8 June 1961); Town Clerk's Office, Canton Town Hall, Collinsville, CT. Deeded from Homer J. Isham to Mildred Susan Gurka, (2.5 acres in East Hill Section, on northerly side of Bahre Corner Rd.)
723. Land records, Vol. 63, p. 316, 22 Dec. 1964; Town Clerk's Office, New Hartford Town Hall, New Hartford, CT. Release from Columbia Corporation to Mildred Susan Gurka (the property on Rte. 44 at Satans Kingdom Gorge).
724. Land records, Vol. 67, p. 333, 16 July 1965; Town Clerk's Office, Canton Town Hall, Collinsville, CT. Deeded from Mildred S. Gurka to George H. Wilber et al., (property on Bahre Corner Rd.)
725. Land records, Vol. 245, p. 156 (30 Aug. 1965); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Deeded from Mildred S. Gurka to Robert P. Benson (the house & property on Lindberg St.)
726. Land records, Vol. 219, p. 115 (7 Jan. 1961); Town Clerk's Office, Torrington City Hall, Torrington, CT. Joseph Gurka quit-claimed his interest in the property on Lindbergh St. to Mildred Gurka.

## **Appendices A through D**

The references are self-contained in these appendices, since they are meant to be stand-alone family sheets.

## **Appendix E**

- e01. This is from the results of research on Tomko/Tomo families in Štrba, performed by Štátny archív v Bytči (the Slovakian Archives in Bytča), and received by C. Terrill 19 May 2008. The results consist of a number of xeroxed pages from Štrba Catholic and Lutheran parish registers, along with a cover letter (in Slovak) and a chart. All of this is available at [judyandconradproductions.net](http://judyandconradproductions.net) in the Gurka Family History project section (look in each category). The originals are Bytca-Letter-2008-05-19.pdf, Bytca-Chart-2008-05-19.pdf, Bytca-Xeroxes-I-2008-05-19.pdf, Bytca-Xeroxes-II-2008-05-19.pdf and Bytca-Xeroxes-III-2008-05-19.pdf. English translations are Bytca-Letter-2008-05-19-Xlt.pdf and Bytca-Xeroxes-2008-05-19-Xlt.pdf.
- e02. Most of the early Tomko family history information is from the letter in the above reference, in Štátny archív v Bytči's response to question 4.
- e03. See, for example, Papp (ref. i1), p. 25.
- e04. This is from the results of research on Tomko/Tomo families in Štrba performed for us in 2006, at Štátny archív v Bytči, by the Institute for Historical Family Research (IHFF Genealogie Gesellschaft mbH, Vienna, Austria; [www.ihff.at](http://www.ihff.at)).
- e05. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 48, no. 6, Marka Tomko.
- e06. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 62, no. 18, Paulus Tomko.
- e07. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 81, no. 10, Johanes Tomko.
- e08. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 101, no. 5, Susanna Tomko.
- e09. *ŠtrbaParish2*: marriages, vol. IV, p. 116, no. 5, Johànes Tomko and Susanna Húska.
- e10. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 173, no. 33, Maria Tomko.
- e11. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. III, p. 18, no. 3, Zuzana Tomko.
- e12. *ŠtrbaParish2*: marriages, vol. IV, p. 120, no. 5, Paulus Koska and Susana Tomko.
- e13. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 175, no. 26, Susanna Tomko.
- e14. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 189, no. 39, Johanes Tomko.

- e15. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. III, p. 11, no. 47, Maria Tomko.
- e16. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. III, p. 24, no. 16, Anna Tomko.
- e17. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. III, p. 36, no. 34, Zsafia Tomko.
- e18. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. I, p. 166, Michal Huszka.
- e19. *ŠtrbaParish2*: marriages, vol. IV, p. 79, no. 4, Michael Huska and Maria Kubis.
- e20. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. I, p. 156, Marya K'ubisz.
- e21. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 62, no. 27, Maria Huska.
- e22. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. (70)? or 84/85, no. 2, Anna Huska.
- e23. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 85, no. 23, Johannes Huska.
- e24. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 94, no. 16, Susana Huska.
- e25. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 108, no. 3, Elisabeta Huska.
- e26. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 122, no. 21, Maria Huska.
- e27. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 129, no. 23, Michael Huska.
- e28. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 139, no. 17, Sophia Huska.
- e29. *ŠtrbaParish2*: marriages, vol. IV, p. 109, no. 6, Johanes Garaj and Anna Husk'a.
- e30. *ŠtrbaParish2*: marriages, vol. IV, p. 123, no. 18, Paulus Tomko and Elisabeth Húska.
- e31. The parentage and ancestry of the Pavol Tomko who married Alzbeta Huska is based on the research results presented in the cover letter from Štátny archív v Bytči (see ref. e01). The relevant information is in their response to question 7.
- e32. *ŠtrbaParish2*: marriages, vol. IV, p. 114, no. 19, Johanes Tomko and Maria Baláš.
- e33. *ŠtrbaParish2*: marriages, vol. IV, p. 122, no. 13, Michael Tomko and Maria Foltin.
- e34. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. II, p. 173, no. 48, Johanes Kubis.
- e35. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. III, p. 3, no. 23, Pavel Tomko.
- e36. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. III, p. 11, no. 46, Michal Tomko.
- e37. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. III, p. 18, no. 11, Anna Tomko.
- e38. *ŠtrbaParish2*: baptisms, vol. III, p. 29, no. 16, Michal Tomko.
- e39. Maria Tomko's birthyear estimate is based on refs. e44, e45, e46 and e71.
- e40. *NY Passenger Lists*: Janos Tomko arrived 2 Feb. 1900 on "Saale," NARA roll T715\_101, page 77, line 23.
- e41. *NY Passenger Lists*: Jan & Pal Tomko arrived 20 Feb 1903 on "Kronprinz Wilhelm," p. 158, lines 20-21.
- e42. *NY Passenger Lists*: Janos Kubisz-Tomko arrived 12 Nov. 1909 on "Cassel," p. 92, line 6. Listed in Ancestry.com index as "Janos Redies Tomko."
- e43. *NY Passenger Lists*: Janos Daniel and Mihaly Tomko arrived 8 Dec. 1906 on "York," NARA roll T715\_807, page 29, lines 7-8.
- e44. *NY Passenger Lists*: Beta, Anna, and Maria Tomko Huska arrived 18 June 1907 on "Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse," NARA roll T715\_930, page 109, lines 10-12.
- e45. *NY Passenger Lists*: Betta and Maria Tomko arrived 13 Sept. 1910 on "Kronprinzessin Cecilie," NARA roll T715\_1553, p. 100, lines 5-6.
- e46. *NY Passenger Lists*: Zsafia Daniel, and Erzsebet and Maria Tomko arrived on "Main," NARA roll T715\_1986, p. 190, lines 21, and 25-26.
- e47. From the 1930 US Census, Sophia Daniel was 20 years old when she first married, and John was 25. Their ages in 1930, as given, were 60 and 56. (See ref. e56.)
- e48. *NY Passenger Lists*: Janos & Zsophia Daniel arrived 14 May 1897 on "Saale," NARA roll M237-673, image 17 (of 19), lines 25-26
- e49. *NY Passenger Lists*: Janos Daniel arrived 13 Nov. 1901 on "H.H. Meier," NARA roll T715\_235, p. 182, line 22.
- e50. *NY Passenger Lists*: Zsofi Daniel, Mihaly Daniel, Anna Brussik and Janos Huska arrived 15 Jan. 1902 on "Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse," NARA roll T715\_248, p. 189, lines 25-28.
- e51. "Edgar Thomson Steel Works", Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org, 2008.
- e52. "Braddock Pennsylvania, Edgar Thompson Steel Works Explosion, August 23, 1895," GenDisasters, Events that Touched Our Ancestors' Lives, www.gendisasters.com, 2008.
- e53. *NY Passenger Lists*: Janos & Pal Daniel arrived 11 Dec. 1906, on "Rhein," NARA roll T715\_808, p. 56, lines 20-21.
- e54. *US Census 1910*: PA, Mercer Co., Sharon Borough, Ward 3, NARA roll T624\_1375, ED 178, sheet 32A, line 22: John Daniel.
- e55. *US Census 1920*: PA, Mercer Co., Hickory Township, ED 87, sheet 14A, line 1: John Daniels.
- e56. *US Census 1930*: PA, Mercer Co., Sharpsville Borough, ED 43-71, sheet 9B, line 93: John Daniel.
- e57. Picture of the Daniels tombstone in the collection of Carol Ludrovsky Maichrye. "DANIELS / John D. / 1870 – 1930," "Sophie D. / 1874 – 19\_\_." Nothing was written on the back. The name and location of the cemetery is not

- known, but John Fann remembers being taken to Ohio for the funeral when he was about six years old (1930).
- e58. Obituary, Cleveland Press, 5 May 1971, John Tomko, Sr.; from the Cleveland Public Library's on-line "Cleveland Necrology File," reel 162, ID 0757668.
- e59. From the 1930 US Census, John Tomko was 25 years old when he first married, and Mary was 16. Their ages in 1930, as given, were 43 and 33. (See ref. e62.)
- e60. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1831944 (OH91), Draft Board 18, Cleveland, Cuyahoga Co., OH: John Tomko.
- e61. *US Census 1920*: Cleveland Ward 26, Cuyahoga Co., OH, ED 485, sheet 11B, line 78: John Tomko.
- e62. *US Census 1930*: Cleveland Ward 26, Cuyahoga Co., OH, ED 18-464, sheet 27B, line 90: John Tomko.
- e63. *US Census 1910*: Cleveland Ward 24, Cuyahoga Co., OH, ED 342, sheet 12A, line 15: Paul Tomko.
- e64. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1831863, Draft Board 16, Cuyahoga Co., OH: Paul Tompko.
- e65. *US Census 1920*: Cleveland Ward 23, Cuyahoga Co., OH, ED 447, sheet 8A, line 13: Paul Tomko.
- e66. From the 1930 US Census, Ludavit Miklovic was 25 years old when he first married, and Anna was 20. Their ages in 1930, as given, were 44 and 38. (See ref. e72.)
- e67. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1831943 (OH90), Draft Board 18, Cleveland, Cuyahoga Co., OH: Ludavit Miklovic.
- e68. *WWI Draft Reg.*: Roll 1556933 (FL26), Draft Board 0, Orange Co., FL: Michael Tomko.
- e69. *The Official Roster of Ohio Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in the World War, 1917-18*. Columbus, OH, USA: The F.J. Heer Printing Co., 1926. Michael Tomko, 3531986. (On-line at Ancestry.com as *Ohio Soldiers in WWI, 1917-1918*.)
- e70. "National Army (USA)", Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org, 2008.
- e71. *US Census 1920*: Cleveland Ward 26, Cuyahoga Co., OH, ED 611, sheet 8A, line 31: Louie Miklovic.
- e72. *US Census 1930*: Cleveland Ward 27, Cuyahoga Co., OH, ED 18-473, sheet 6A, line 18: Ludavit Miklovic.
- e73. *US Census 1930*: Cleveland Ward 26, Cuyahoga Co., OH, ED 18-462, sheet 13A, line 33: Michael Tomko.
- e74. *US Census 1900*: Cuba, Port of El Caney, Military and Naval Forces, ED 114, NARA roll T623\_1838, sheet 9B, line 73: Mathias Muzar.
- e75. *US Census 1910*: Galveston Ward 7, TX, ED 41, sheet 11A, line 28: Mathias Muzar.
- e76. *US Census 1920*: Galveston Ward 7, TX, ED 46, sheet 11B, line 76: Mathias Muzar.
- e77. Obituary, Cleveland Plain Dealer, 17 June 1963, Paul Tomko; from the Cleveland Public Library's on-line "Cleveland Necrology File," reel 162, ID 0757680.
- e78. Obituary, Cleveland Press, 3 Jan. 1959, Ada L. Tomko; from the Cleveland Public Library's on-line "Cleveland Necrology File," reel 162, ID 0757648.
- e79. No record of the death, sometime after 1919, of "our" Elizabeth Tomko was found, either in the Cleveland Public Library's "Cleveland Necrology File" (<http://cpl.org> {Databases & Links Library / Genealogy / Cleveland Necrology File}) or in the Ohio Historical Society's on-line Death Certificate Index ([www.ohiohistory.org/dindex](http://www.ohiohistory.org/dindex)).



## Picture Credits

### Chapter 1

|                                                 |                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1.1 (Tomko sisters, NYC, 1910)                  | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 1.2 (Štrba postcard, 1950's)                    | Susan (Barger) Zbell       |
| 1.2 (Pavel Tomko, 1926)                         | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 1.3 (Štrba, 1994)                               | John Daniel Fann           |
| 1.3 (John and Mary Poliacik, ~1909)             | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 1.4 (Daniel Fano house)                         | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 1.5 [See pp. 3.5 & 3.14]                        |                            |
| 1.6 (Sophie Tomko, early 1910's)                | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 1.6 (Anna Tomko, ~1910)                         | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 1.7 (Sophie Tomko & Sophie Macko, early 1910's) | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 1.7 (Sophie Tomko & friends, early 1910's)      | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 1.8 (Alzbeta & Mary Tomko, ~1913)               | Lynn (Jackson) Parker      |

### Chapter 2

|                                                       |                            |
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| 2.1 (Susan Hechko and children, c. 1921)              | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 2.1 (Mildred and Martha Hechko, c. 1921)              | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.2 (Maria Poliacik & son John, c. 1912)              | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.2 (John and Sophie Fano, 1917)                      | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.3 (Anna & Steve Kobezda and family, ~1919)          | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 2.3 (The Tomko sisters and their families, c. 1922)   | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.4 (Louis & Wilhemina Czenkner, ~1919)               | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 2.4 (Mike Tomko, WWI, ~1918)                          | Donald Ray Tomko           |
| 2.4 (Sophie & John Fano, and Mildred, ~1922)          | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.5 (John Fano, ~1920)                                | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.5 (Daniel Fano)                                     | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.6 (John D. & Mildred Fano, ~1924)                   | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.6 (Poliaciks and Fanos, on lawn, ~1924)             | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.6 (Mildred Fano and Martha Hechko, ~1927)           | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.6 (Martha Hechko and Mildred Fano, ~1930)           | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.7 (Kobezda children, ~1926)                         | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 2.7 (Paul Tomko, ~1928)                               | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.7 (Sophie Daniel and husband?, late 1920's)         | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 2.8 (Mildred Fano, ~1930, in Slovakian dress)         | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 2.8 (Mildred Hechko, 1933)                            | Judith (Gurka) Bensch      |
| 2.9 (Group on farm truck, ~1936)                      | Judith (Gurka) Bensch      |
| 2.9 (Washington Irving H. S. Players Club, 1932)      | Judith (Gurka) Bensch      |
| 2.10 (John and Sophie Fano, 1933)                     | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 2.10 (Paul Tomko, 1936)                               | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 2.11 (Martha Hechko, 1936)                            | Judith (Gurka) Bensch      |
| 2.11 (John D. and Mildred Fano, 1937)                 | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 2.12 (Susan Hechko & childred & stepchildren?, ~1936) | Judith (Gurka) Bensch      |
| 2.12 (Anna & Louis Czenkner, and Lillian, 1938)       | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 2.12 (Susan Hechko's New Baltimore farm)              | Conrad Terrill             |
| 2.12 (Susan Hechko's New Baltimore barn)              | Conrad Terrill             |

### Chapter 3

|                                             |                            |
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| 3.1 (Susan and Fred Kummer, 1950's)         | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.1 (Susan and Fred Kummer, 1950's)         | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.2 (Frank Schmidt and Fred Kummer, 1950's) | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.2 (Poliaciks and others, mid-1930s)       | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |

|                                                         |                            |
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| 3.3 (John & Maria Poliacik & family, ~1940)             | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.3 (Fred & Susan Kummer, & Barbara Gurka, ~1956)       | Judith (Gurka) Bensch      |
| 3.4 (Sophie Fann)                                       | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.4 (Joe & Christine Hecker, 1958)                      | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.5 (Martha Hechko, Susan Kummer, Millie Schmidt)       | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.5 (The Tomko Sisters, 1958)                           | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 3.6 (Adolf Czenkner, 1930's)                            | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 3.6 (Carol Ludrovsky, Lillian Czenkner, Lady Jane)      | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.6 (Anna and Carol Ludrovsky, 1942)                    | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.6 (Maria Poliacik, 1957)                              | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 3.6 (Eleanore, Steve & Ben Kobezda)                     | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.6 (Lillian & Gene Reinke and family, 1970)            | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 3.6 (Maria Poliacik, Sophie & John Fann, Anna Czenkner) | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.7 (Anna, Therese & Mildred Miklovic, Don Tomko)       | Lynn (Jackson) Parker      |
| 3.7 (Auntie Daniel, Sophie Fann, Anna Miklovic)         | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.7 (A Tomko family gathering, 1932)                    | Lynn (Jackson) Parker      |
| 3.7 (John and Mary Tomko, ~1935)                        | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.7 (Paul and Molly Tomko, and children)                | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 3.7 (Mike and Ada Tomko)                                | Donald Ray Tomko           |
| 3.8 (Susan Kummer & Martha Hechko, 1962)                | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 3.8 (Anna Czenkner & Maria Poliacik, 1970)              | Lillian (Czenkner) Reinke  |
| 3.9 (Susan Kummer and Susan Clark, 1968)                | Barbara (Gurka) Clark      |
| 3.9 (Susan Kummer and Susan Clark, 1968)                | Barbara (Gurka) Clark      |
| 3.10 (John and Jean Poliacik and children, 1951)        | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.11 (Maria and John Poliacik)                          | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.11 (Joe Poliacik, WWII, early 1940's)                 | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.12 (Czenkner/Kobezda family gathering, 1938)          | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.12 (Anna Czenkner and Anna Ludrovsky)                 | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.13 (Joseph and Anna Ludrovsky, 1941)                  | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.13 (John and Sophie Fann, 1951)                       | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.14 (Fann family gathering, 1960's)                    | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt     |
| 3.14 (Paul Tomko, 1940)                                 | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |
| 3.15 (Paul Tomko, 1948)                                 | Carol (Ludrovsky) Maichrye |

## Chapter 4

|                                                  |                          |
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| 4.1 (John and Susan Gurka, 1910's)               | Barbara (Gurka) Clark    |
| 4.3 (John Gurka, 1910's)                         | [the same, photo-edited] |
| 4.5 (Susan Gurka, 1910's)                        | Esther (Gurka) Remsen    |
| 4.6 (Suzanna Gurka, ~1916)                       | Arthur J. Barger         |
| 4.6 (Evelyn Yohman and Martin Gurka, ~1925)      | Esther (Gurka) Remsen    |
| 4.7 (Joseph Gurka, ~1925)                        | Barbara (Gurka) Clark    |
| 4.7 (Joe Gurka, ~1932)                           | Judith (Gurka) Bensch    |
| 4.8 (Gurka house, ~1930)                         | Judith (Gurka) Bensch    |
| 4.8 (Gurka house, and Joe)                       | Judith (Gurka) Bensch    |
| 4.8 (John Gurka, ~1930)                          | Judith (Gurka) Bensch    |
| 4.9 (Joe Gurka, S.S. Manhattan passengers, 1933) | Judith (Gurka) Bensch    |
| 4.10 (Joseph Gurka, 1933)                        | Judith (Gurka) Bensch    |
| 4.10 (Ethel Gurka, 1934)                         | Esther (Gurka) Remsen    |
| 4.10 (Susan Gurka, 1934)                         | Esther (Gurka) Remsen    |
| 4.11 (Susan Gurka's house, NYC, 1935)            | Esther (Gurka) Remsen    |
| 4.11 (Church of God mission, NYC, 1935)          | Esther (Gurka) Remsen    |
| 4.12 (Glad Tidings Convention, 1935)             | James Joseph Gurka       |

## Chapter 5

|                            |                  |
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| 5.1 (Suzanna Gurka, ~1918) | Arthur J. Barger |
|----------------------------|------------------|

|                                                    |                      |
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| 5.2 (Evelyn Yohman, ~1937)                         | Arthur J. Barger     |
| 5.2 (Evelyn and John Barger, 1947)                 | Arthur J. Barger     |
| 5.3 (Maria Barger and children, 1929)              | Susan (Barger) Zbell |
| 5.4 (The Meleky house, 1930's)                     | Susan (Barger) Zbell |
| 5.5 (Maria Barger and children, ~1933)             | Susan (Barger) Zbell |
| 5.6 (Mengusovce school picture, 1934)              | Susan (Barger) Zbell |
| 5.7 (Barger family butter-churners, ~1937)         | Susan (Barger) Zbell |
| 5.8 (Maria Barger & children passport photo, 1939) | Susan (Barger) Zbell |
| 5.9 (S.S. Bremen)                                  | Ancestry.com         |
| 5.10 (John and Mary Barger & family, 1942)         | Susan (Barger) Zbell |
| 5.11 (Joseph Yohman and John Barger, 1950's)       | Arthur J. Barger     |
| 5.12 (Barger/Yohman family gathering)              | Arthur J. Barger     |

## **Chapter 6**

|                                                      |                       |
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| 6.1 (Martin Gurka, ~1932)                            | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.2 (Martin Gurka and Paul Boders, ~1932)            | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.2 (Martin Gurka at Prof. Ninn's?, 1933)            | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.3 (Martin Gurka and young friend, ~1933)           | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.4 (Martin Gurka and Joe Zacker, 1930's)            | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.4 (Martin and Bertha Gurka, 1934)                  | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.5 (Martin Gurka, Church of God, NYC, ~1935)        | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.6 (Martin & Joe Gurka et al., NYC, ~1935)          | Judith (Gurka) Bensch |
| 6.7 (Martin Gurka's house, Torrington, ~1940)        | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.7 (Judy, Ester, Dave, Jim, 1944)                   | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.8 (Martin & Bertha & family, Balance Rock, ~1949)  | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.8 (Martin & Bertha & family, Salvation Army, 1952) | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.9 (Martin Gurka, Clayton, MA, ~1957)               | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.9 (Martin Gurka preaching, Clayton, 1950's)        | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |
| 6.10 (Esther, Bertha and David, 1967)                | Esther (Gurka) Remsen |

## **Chapter 7**

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| 7.1 (Mildred & Joe Gurka, 1936)              | Judith (Gurka) Bensch |
| 7.1 (Joe Gurka in old farm truck)            | Judith (Gurka) Bensch |
| 7.2 (Joe Gurka, 1936)                        | Judith (Gurka) Bensch |
| 7.2 (Mildred Hechko, NYC, 1936)              | Judith (Gurka) Bensch |
| 7.3 (Maiden Lane, 1941)                      | Judith (Gurka) Bensch |
| 7.3 (Joe Gurka, 1936)                        | Judith (Gurka) Bensch |
| 7.4 (Liberty Home sign)                      | Conrad Terrill        |
| 7.4 (Gurka house, ~1946)                     | Barbara (Gurka) Clark |
| 7.4 (Inscription in cellar floor)            | Conrad Terrill        |
| 7.4 (Inscription in garage floor)            | Conrad Terrill        |
| 7.4 (Clark house, 2006)                      | Conrad Terrill        |
| 7.5 (Joe Gurka and kids, ~1946)              | Karyn (Bensch) Allen  |
| 7.5 (Mildred Gurka & daughters, ~1947)       | Karyn (Bensch) Allen  |
| 7.6 (Gurka children, ~1948)                  | Barbara (Gurka) Clark |
| 7.6 (Same Gurkas, 1998)                      | Barbara (Gurka) Clark |
| 7.7 (Joe & kids, ~1949)                      | Karyn (Bensch) Allen  |
| 7.7 (Kids, on a trip, ~1952)                 | Karyn (Bensch) Allen  |
| 7.8 (Motel foundation)                       | Judith (Gurka) Bensch |
| 7.8 (Bob, Barb, Judy & Jim, ~1962)           | Karyn (Bensch) Allen  |
| 7.9 (Bahre Corner Rd. house, 2006)           | Conrad Terrill        |
| 7.9 (Joe Gurka at Conn. Gen., c. 1963)       | Judith (Gurka) Bensch |
| 7.10 (Barbara and parents, 1967)             | Barbara (Gurka) Clark |
| 7.10 (Mildred Gurka and granddaughter Susan) | Barbara (Gurka) Clark |

## **Appendix E**

|                                                |                        |
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| E.11 (Jan Tomko [from p. 3-7])                 | Mildred (Fann) Schmidt |
| E.11 (Pavol, Anna, Michal Tomko [from p. 3-7]) | Lynn (Jackson) Parker  |
| E.11 (Maria Tomko [from p. E-16])              | Donald Ray Tomko       |
| E.16 (At Don Tomko's wedding, 1965)            | Donald Ray Tomko       |
| E.16 (At Don Tomko's wedding, 1965)            | Donald Ray Tomko       |

## **About the Authors**

|                                       |                       |
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| AA-1 (Barb, 1945)                     | Karyn (Bensch) Allen  |
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**Indexing notes:** A page number in boldface indicates that there is at least one picture of the subject on that page. Many Chapter 5 topics concerning life in Mengusovce, Slovakia, may be found under “Mengusovce.” The indexing of Appendix E is light because these ancestors were of the remote past. They have been grouped under (Tomko/Tomo/Huska/Five Cousins) “early ancestors.”

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## About the Authors

### Barbara Gurka Clark

15 Jan. 1944 — 3 Sept. 2006



1945



c. 1962



c. 1952



Barb & Rich, July 1967



Barb's family, lined up for their picture, ~1983.



Susan, Barb, Rich, Rick, ~1983.



October, 2004—Rick & Lisa & family, Rich, Barb, and Susan & Tom McNerney & family..

**Conrad Terrill**

Conrad and his wife Judy are amateur family historians.

