

The following text was written in 1980 by Gladys (Schwartz) Kaminsky (1918-2001), the youngest child of Benjamin Schwartz and Julia (Weiss) Schwartz; it is the introduction to her document "Schwartz-Weiss Family Tree."

Benjamin Schwartz was born in Santo, Hungary, near Trieste, on November 19, 1873. At the age of three he started Hebrew School, and at six, Public School in the German language, since Hungary was in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In three years he finished the five-year program, and at the age of nine he was apprenticed to a tailor. For a week he sat crosslegged on a table for twelve hours a day learning to sew, getting up only to sweep the floor. He told his father he didn't like it. His father said 'Then you'd better go to America'.

Benjamin's father's father, Jacob Schwartz, was a teacher. His mother's father, Benjamin Goldman, was a Rabbi. Benjamin's father, Herman, had owned a prosperous farm; his first wife was rich. The farm burned down at harvest time, and they were penniless, and moved to Buda Pest. The oldest son, Morris, went to America, and sent for his 10-1/2 year old sister Raisie (Theresa) and his 9 year old brother Benjamin. They had a stormy voyage in early 1883, and Benjamin was the only passenger who was able to eat.

They landed at Castle Gardens, Manhattan, in New York City, and Morris was on the dock waiting for them. All three of them lived together and worked, and in six or seven years were able to send for their father, step-mother and all the younger children. Soon after arrival in New York, Benjamin tried to go to night school to learn English. He worked until 7 p.m. and the school doors closed at that exact time. He appealed to the superintendent to leave the door open for him for a few minutes longer, and attended a few classes. When the doors were again found locked, he gave up and got no further schooling. However, he taught himself to read and write English, and read 'War and Peace', all Winston Churchill's books, and many other books, newspapers and magazines. He loved historical novels.

One of his earliest memories of New York was the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge on a very hot day - so hot that women fainted, especially when thousands of people struggled to be the first to walk across the Bridge. Since the Bridge was opened on May 24, 1883, his arrival in New York was somewhere between January and May 1883. Another of his memories was at age 15, going to work during the Blizzard of 1888, when the streets were snowless on one side, and people could walk out of the first story window onto frozen snow on the other side of the street.

In America, Benjamin worked in the clothing industry and learned to be a cutter, patternmaker, and grader of ladies' cloaks and suits. A patternmaker looked at the design drawn by a designer and created a paper pattern. A cutter laid out many layers of cloth on a long table, then positioned paper patterns on the cloth so as to use every possible inch of material, and then cut. First he used a large scissors called shears; then as technology improved, he used a round knife and later a 'long knife' that was able to cut through many times as many layers of cloth at one time. A grader took a pattern in size 16, for instance, and from that made patterns in size 18, 20, and larger, as well as size 14, 12, etc. This work was highly skilled and well paid, but very seasonal - and often a season lasted for only four or six weeks.

Conditions in the industry were very poor for the workers - twelve hour days, six day weeks - and the workmen provided their own tools. When he brought home his tools, we knew the season was over. He was a pioneering member in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and a strong union supporter. In the first decade of the 20th century he went into

business for himself, but it proved to be a bad year, and he went bankrupt. From then on he worked at his trade whenever a job was to be had. In the depression he was out of work most of the time, but had six quarters of coverage in the three years after the start of Social Security - enough to entitle him to become one of the first recipients of Social Security payments in 1940 - a most welcome \$15 per month. In World War II his services were again in demand, and he worked on clothing for servicemen until 1945, when he was 72 years old.

Julia Weiss was born 'on a hot day in August', 1877, in Buda Pest, Hungary. There had been other babies before her, but they got sick in their second summer. Her mother recognized the deadly symptoms and ran with each to a photographer to get a picture before they died. Helen Heyman remembered seeing a mantle with six or seven of those tragic pictures. Only her mother, Rose, survived, until Julia was born. In addition, there was an older brother, William, who lived to the age of 11. He was so brilliant that professors came to consult with him. He died of brain fever, they said.

When Julia was four years old, her parents came to America with her, 11 year old Rose, and the younger Bertha & Regina. Jacob was born in New York.

I estimate they arrived in New York between August 1881 and March 1882. Julia went through public school in New York until she graduated eighth grade at the age of 13, having worked summers in the clothing industry from at least age 9. She then went to work as an operator on a treadle sewing machine.

The language of her home, as well as Benjamin's, was German. Her mother died when Julia was 6, and she was put into an orphan asylum with her sisters Birdie, Geanie, and her brother Jake for the two years until their father remarried and brought them home. Rose worked and kept house for their father during those two years, but she moved to their Aunt Betty (Betnany in Hungarian) when he remarried.

Julia's father, David Weiss, worked as a foreman in the clothing industry. That meant that he worked 13 hours a day so he could be there both earlier and later than the workers. He also helped form the Kaiser Franz Joseph Lodge, a fraternal order with cemetery rights for the members. During World War I Kaisers were hated, and the name was changed to Justice Lodge. He was a very active member of the Lodge, and was home very little. Most of their family became members and are buried in the large Justice Lodge plot in Block 3, Mount Hebron Cemetery, Queens, N.Y.C., now overlooking the World's Fair site.

Benjamin and Julia married October 23, 1898, after a four year courtship, and had eight children, one dying as a toddler from diphtheria. During the times when Benjamin was not working, he cut clothing for themselves and all their children; Julia did most of the sewing, but he could operate the sewing machine also, and did so when she was too busy. Also, he taught all his children to read before they started school. He taught them to play cards and checkers also at very early ages. His method was to 'give them a show' - meaning that he lost and child won! He took his children on nature walks, pointing out the beauty of clouds, trees in their various seasons, flowers and plants. Julia became an excellent cook and always strived to cook to everyone's taste - sometimes making four main dishes for one dinner because one liked veal cutlets while another preferred pot roast, etc.

They were very loving and caring parents. They attended the weddings of seven children. Julia lived to see twelve grandchildren, and Benjamin lived to see all 16 of their grandchildren

and their first great-grandchild. There are currently 27 great - grandchildren and one baby is due in April 1980. Julia and Benjamin celebrated 49 anniversaries of their wedding, and Julia died December 16, 1947. Benjamin died seven years later, on January 6, 1955. They were a force for goodness and honesty all of their lives.

Gladys Kaminsky
their loving daughter
January 15, 1980