

Comisarow Family (623 words)

Mayer Komisaruk (Comisarow) was born in 1879 in Grafskoy, a Jewish agricultural colony in Southeastern Ukraine. His parents were Velvel Komisaruk (1838–1898) of Grafskoy and Feigel Winnikovsky (1840–1925) of the neighboring colony of Kobilnye. In 1848 Mayer's grandfather, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Komisaruk (1798–1853), had led several Litvak families from Kovno Gubernia, Lithuania on a government-sponsored migration to virgin land in Southeastern Ukraine. The inducement was a perpetual familial leasehold of 40 desyatin (= 44 hectares = 116 acres) of land and a 50-year exemption from military conscription. After Mayer's father Velvel died the family plot of forty desyatin was evenly divided between Mayer and his older brother Berel. In 1904 Mayer married Riva Lev (b 1875) of Novozlatopol, another Jewish agricultural colony 25 km away. Five children were born to Mayer and Riva: Luba/Lillian (1905–1983), Velvel/William (1906–), Zalman/Samuel (1909–1966), Avrom (1911–1918), and Peretz/Paul (1913–). In 1912 Mayer emigrated to Canada, leaving Riva and their children with Riva's family in Novozlatopol, and established a small dairy in Winnipeg. His emigration to Canada was preceded in 1901 by that of his cousin, David Moshe Comisaroff of Winnipeg. In 1914 Mayer mailed tickets for passage of his family to Canada but WW I had started, trapping the family in Ukraine. In 1917 Mayer moved to Leduc where he purchased a small grocery store from Valodya Wilner, a son-in-law of a maternal cousin. In 1922 Mayer's nephew (Berel's son) Leon Komisaruk of Detroit went to Europe and extricated Mayer's family including his father-in-law Baruch Lev (1849–1929), and fifteen other relatives. The family had had no contact with Mayer since 1914. They had successively survived the First World War, the Russian Revolution, the Russian Civil War, raids by the post-Civil War bandit gangs in the area, the 1921 natural famine in Southeastern Ukraine and a typhus epidemic. Contemporary photos of the family members show them suffering from kwashiorkor. Riva and her children arrived in Winnipeg on Halloween 1922. After spending some time in Leader, Saskatchewan with relatives of Valodya Wilner, in 1923 Mayer, Riva and children moved to Stony Plain where the family operated a general store until Mayer's retirement in 1946. Newhouse Wholesale of Edmonton was instrumental in providing the original grocery stock for the store. After retirement, Mayer and Riva lived on 119th Street two doors north of the present Beth Israel Synagogue, where they were members of the congregation. Mayer was active in the Gemilus Khasidim, the Hebrew Free Loan Society and was the long time Treasurer and Life Member of the Edmonton Talmud Torah. Mayer died in 1958 and Riva died in 1969. In 1934 Lillian Comisarow married Saul Wainberg (1903–) of Edmonton and they moved to Montreal in 1950 with their sons Allen and David. Allen is a periodontist in Montreal and David (Carmel) lives on Kibbutz Yodfat in Israel. Lillian

died in 1983. William Comisarow married Sophie Ratner (b 1906) of Edmonton in 1938 and operated a general store in Viking from 1934 until they retired to Vancouver in 1982. William and Sophie had two sons, Mel, a Professor of Chemistry at the University of British Columbia, and Rick, who is a urologist in Toronto. Sophie died in 1998. In 1947 Sam Comisarow married Esther Naiman of New York City. Sam and Esther operated the family general store in Stony Plain until Sam's death in 1966. Esther died in New Jersey in 1988. Paul Comisarow served overseas in WW II and participated in the liberation of Holland, Belgium and France. In 1946 he married Esther Simkin (1920-) of Edmonton. Paul and Esther were in the hotel business for many years and retired in Vancouver in 1972.