

THE COHENS OF BUDVIECIAI, MABERLY & MONTREAL

Speaking at the Canadian Consul General's residence in Los Angeles, on the occasion of his 2010 Grammy Award, poet, musician, and novelist Leonard Norman Cohen (1934-2016) recalled,

My great grandfather, Lazarus Cohen, came to Canada in 1869, to the ... little town [of] Maberly. It's customary to thank people for the help and aid they've given. On this occasion, because of the great hospitality that was accorded my ancestor who came here over 140 years ago, I want to thank this country, Canada, for allowing us to live and work and flourish in a place that was different from all other places in the world.¹



Eliezer Lazarus Cohen (1844-1914)

Leonard Cohen's great grandfather, Eliezer Lazarus Cohen, was born at Budvieciai, Lithuania, a small Jewish shtetl (village), located about 10 kilometers southwest of Vilkaviskis (aka Volkovishki). At the time, however, Lithuania did not exist as an independent state; from 1795 until 1918 it was a province of Poland within the Tsarist Russian Empire.

Commonly known by his middle name, Lazarus, rather than Eliezer², he was the eldest of seven³ children born to Chaim Cohen Kats (1818-1911) and his wife Sara Treina (1824-1899); Lazarus (1844-1914), Esther Rachel (1848-1900), Jacob (1850-1950), Fischel 'Philip' (1855-1938), Bessie/Betsy (b.1858), Dora Deborah (1859-1944) and Tzvi Hirsch (1862-1950). His parents, Chaim and Sara, had been born in the nearby Lithuanian town known as Verbalis in Polish or Virbalen in Yiddish.

Lazarus' grandparents were Rabbi Judah Leib HaCohen Budwitcher Kagan (1775-1850) and Gertrude Wallerstein (b.1789) of Budvieciai. Rabbi HaCohen Kagan had "*studied at the Wilkowisk Seminary and then under Rabbi Ben Zion Chariff at the Seminary in Wilna*".⁴

¹ Toronto *Globe & Mail*, January 29, 2010.

² The name 'Eliezer' means 'God is my help' in Hebrew.

³ Some sources say there may have been an eighth child, name, and dates unknown.

⁴ *Canadian Jewish Times*, April 11, 1902.

Lazarus Cohen studied at the prestigious Etz Chaim Yeshiva (Talmudical college) at Valozhyn in what is today Belarus. Founded by Rabbi Chaim Volozhim in 1806, the school came to be known as the 'mother of all yeshivas' and served as the model for all later yeshivas in Lithuania. When Lazarus was a student there, Etz Chaim was at the peak of its fame for scholarship under the direction of Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin who became the rosh yeshiva (dean) in 1854.⁵

According to one source, after graduation Lazarus Cohen went on to teach at "*one of the most rigorous yeshivas in the county*"⁶, at Wylkowski in southern Poland, near the Slovak and Czech border. In 1867 he married Fraidie 'Fanny' Garmaise⁷ (1844-1925), who had been born at Vilkaviskis, Lithuanian Poland, and the following year, he left Lithuania, leaving his wife and newborn son, Lyon, to follow.

The specific reasons behind Lazarus' decision to emigrate are unknown but must have been related to the political and economic upheaval then prevailing in Lithuania. In 1862 a 'Revolutionary Movement Committee' was formed to organize a revolt against the Russian regime. In 1863 the committee named a 'Provisional National Government' and declared an insurrection in Lithuania and Poland. A year later insurrectionist forces were defeated by the Russian army at Birzai in northern Lithuania near the Latvian border, but the revolutionary movement continued its struggle through partisan activity for many years. In 1867 the unrest was compounded by a widespread crop failure, followed by starvation and a major cholera outbreak.

The combination of insecurity and food shortages prompted the first trickle of emigration from Lithuania; a trickle that, by the pogrom years of the 1880s, would become a flood. The largest part of this early migration began in the Cohen's home districts of Vilkaviskis and Kalvarija. In 1867-1868 the District of Vilkaviskis, locale of the Cohen home village of Budvieciai, lost 250 of its population to emigration, and the overwhelming majority of those were Jews. Most of these moved no further than Prussia, or other parts of Germany, but Lazarus Cohen ventured much further.

Some Cohen biographies state that Lazarus first "*emigrated to England*"⁸ or had "*a brief stay in Scotland*"⁹, but while he probably travelled via the United Kingdom, his stay there would indeed have been short because by 1869 he had reached Morrow's Mills, South Sherbrooke Township, Lanark County, Ontario, Canada. After landing at Montreal, he no doubt travelled most of the inland by train, but, until 1882, when the railway reached Morrow's Mills and the village was re-named Maberly, Perth was the end of line¹⁰. From Perth, he would have travelled onward by road.

⁵ Etz Chaim Yeshiva operated until the Russian authorities forced its closure in 1892. It reopened in 1899 and functioned until the outbreak of World War Two in 1939.

⁶ *I'm your Man: The Life of Leonard Cohen*, by Sylvie Simmons (2012) ISBN 9780224090636

⁷ Daughter of Beryl (Dov, Ber) Garmaise (b.1810) and unknown mother.

⁸ *A Broken Hallelujah: Rock and Roll, Redemption, & the Life of Leonard Cohen*, by Liel Leibovitz (2014) ISBN 978-0-393-35073-9

⁹ *I'm your Man: The Life of Leonard Cohen*, by Sylvie Simmons (2012) ISBN 9780224090636

¹⁰ A branch line of the Ottawa and Brockville Railway had been built to Perth in 1859 then, between 1882 and 1884, the Ontario & Quebec Railway (O&Q), a CPR subsidiary, laid track through Maberly connecting Perth to Toronto.

How did a Lithuanian Jew find himself making a new home in the tiny and rather remote village of Maberly? Whatever it might first appear, Cohen's journey to South Sherbrooke Township was not by chance. He was part of a small but significant chain migration of Jews from both eastern and western Europe into the Canadian backwoods.

That there was a Jewish community in Lanark County in the late 1860s, as small as it may have been, may seem remarkable, and even more so, perhaps, when one considers that in the 1871 census, among a total population of 3,689,000¹¹, there were only 1,115 Jews living in all of Canada. Never-the-less Lazarus Cohen reached Maberly following a well beaten path.

The 1869 edition of the *Ontario Gazetteer & Directory* lists the firm of "Goldemo & Goldberg, General Merchants" operating at Maberly, and the 1871 census enumerates the presence of Swedish born 30-year-old Jacob Goldberg, "Merchant"¹². 'Goldemo' of the merchant store 'Goldemo & Goldberg' was probably Isaac Goldman who was also the Maberly Postmaster in the 1860s.¹³ The names Louis Wartelsky and Bloomsbury¹⁴ also appear with Jewish connections to Maberly.

Goldberg and Goldman were not the only "Israelite" names appearing in the local area census, directories, and newspapers of the period. Isaac Blumberg and Solomon Silverstone¹⁵ jointly owned stores at McDonalds Corners and Elphin by the early 1870s. Blumberg was simultaneously the Elphin Postmaster, the post office no doubt located in his store.

An 1880 directory lists 'Goldstein Bros.' as merchants at Lanark. Frank Cohen and his wife Etta had a general store in Lanark Village in the 1880s and in 1881, Solomon Silverstone and Henry Schlomer¹⁶, both 'storekeepers', were living there as boarders in the home of widow Hester Benjamin¹⁷, a seamstress. Frank Cohen's brother, William Moses Cohen, and wife Hattie¹⁸ took over the Lanark store in 1889 and ran the business until 1932. Another Cohen brother, Abraham, and his wife Sarah ran a store at Brightside. (The Cohen family of Lanark and Brightside do not seem to be connected in any way to Lazarus Cohen).

In the same years Isaac Mendels and his son Joseph were also running a store at Lanark and by the 1890s the Mendels had opened a department store, in Perth¹⁹ and another store at Westport. In the 1890s Hiram Silverstone²⁰, was a 'dealer in clothing & furs' at a store on Foster Street in Perth.

¹¹ *Canadian Encyclopedia*. In the 1861 census the Jewish population had actually been slightly larger at 1,186 persons and by 1881 the Jewish population of Canada had only grown to 2,443. In 2020 the Jewish population of Canada is about 350,000.

¹² Oddly, in the 1871 census, when he is living the household of Alvah Adams, Jacob Goldberg's religion is recorded as "Lutheran", although in the 1881 census he is recorded as "Israelite". In 1871 he may have been hiding his Jewish ethnicity/religion or the census enumerator may have made assumptions based on his Swedish nationality.

¹³ *Canadian Farmer's Almanac* pg. 37, 1875.

¹⁴ South Sherbrooke Historical Society.

¹⁵ Born Germany c1847.

¹⁶ b.c1852

¹⁷ Born Germany c1856. Living with two children, Dinah b.1877 and Harris b.c1879.

¹⁸ Their children, born at Lanark, were Herman, Eleanor, Philip, and Rose.

¹⁹ On the corner of Wilson and Foster Streets.

²⁰ Born in Germany, married to a woman named Rose.

In the 1870s-1880s, when more than half of Canada's 1,115 Jews were living in the cities of Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton, the villages of southern Lanark County counted among their citizens a remarkable number of Jewish families; Benjamin, Bloomsbury, Blumberg, Cohen, Feldman, Goldberg, Goldman, Goldstein, Wartelsky, Schlomer, Silverstone, Mendel and probably others.²¹



LtoR - Lazarus, Lyon & Fraidie Cohen at Maberly c1878
(Photo from *Jewish Chronicle* courtesy of Karen Prytula)

joined him at Maberly in 1870. Lazarus and Fraidie Cohen's second son, Abraham Zebulun, was born at Maberly in 1879²⁶.

In 1876 and 1878 Lazarus purchased two small plots of land in the Village of Maberly²⁷ and in 1885 purchased full ownership of the Maberly 'Red Store'²⁸ from Jacob Goldberg.

Just as Lazarus Cohen did not arrive in Maberly without contacts, it is also apparent that he did not arrive without some resources. One account of his earliest years in Canada says that when he first reached Maberly in 1869 he went to work as a "lumber storeman"²² and he is later described as "prospering in lumber"²³. As lumbering was the major enterprise in South Sherbrooke and other parts of Lanark County in the 1860s, it is likely that he was employed in some connection to the lumber trade, but more specifically as an employee and soon partner of merchant Jacob Goldberg. Lazarus Cohen does not appear in the 1871 census²⁴ but 10 years later "Storekeeper" and "Israelite", Lazarus Cohen, with his wife and children, are enumerated as living in the same household as (unmarried) Jacob Goldberg²⁵.

Within a year of his arrival, Lazarus Cohen was sufficiently established to send for his family, and wife Fraidie, with their son Lyon,

²¹ There was no synagogue in the area until establishment of Congregation Agudath Achim at Perth in 1946. The Agudath Achim Synagogue closed in 1980.

²² *I'm Your Man: The Life of Leonard Cohen*, by Sylvie Simmons (2012) ISBN 9780224090636

²³ *Ottawa Citizen*, November 30, 2010, article by great-grandson Andrew Cohen.

²⁴ At Maberly or anywhere in Canada.

²⁵ Later married Rose Feldman and fathered at least one daughter.

²⁶ With the assistance of midwife Isabella Cameron.

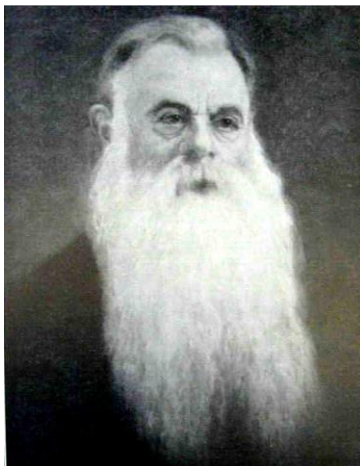
²⁷ Purchased from shoemaker Henry Morrison (1876), 3/10ths of an acre from C-8/L-14(W) of South Sherbrooke Township and part of C-8/L-13, north of the Fall River, from Jacob Goldberg (1878).

²⁸ The Red Store, aka Rigney General Store, had been established by Henry Rigney who also farmed at South Sherbrooke C-9/L-14 and was still dealing in farm produce in the late 1880s. Rigney was the Maberly Postmaster from the 1890s into the early years of the 20th century. He also served as Clerk of South Sherbrooke Township.

In the late 1870s Maberly had a population of about 200 and boasted a woolen mill, carding mill, two sawmills, grist mill, shingle mill, carriage works, cheese factory, shoemaker, coffin maker and five general stores including that of Lazarus Cohen.

By 1879 Lazarus' brother, Fischel 'Philip' Cohen, and his wife Jaga Garmaise²⁹, had joined him in South Sherbrooke Township. That April their daughter, Rachel, was born, at Maberly. Fischel may have accompanied Lazarus's wife and son on their journey to Canada in 1870, but, like Lazarus, he and his family do not appear in South Sherbrooke census of 1871. As Rachel's birth registration describes her father as a 'merchant', Fischel may also have been an employee of, or held some stake in, the Goldberg-Cohen store.

Fischel, however, was only briefly in Maberly. Two years later, the 1881 census enumerates him in Montreal working as a trader, then as a tailor (1891), master tailor (1901), merchant (1911) and in the 'clothing business' (1921). Fischel and Jaga Cohen were already the parents of two daughters (born 1874 and c1875) before they arrived at Maberly and would become parents of another daughter and a son born between 1879 and 1893 at Montreal. Fischel Cohen died at Montreal in 1938 and his wife Jaga Garmaise-Cohen died at Montreal in 1937.



Eliezar Lazarus Cohen 1847-1914

In 1883, after a 14-year residence at Maberly, Lazarus Cohen and family moved to Montreal, motivated, it seems, by the desire to better educate sons Lyon Cohen and Abraham Z. Cohen³⁰.

In March 1885 Lazarus and Fraidie Cohen, resident in Montreal, sold the part of South Sherbrooke C-8/L-13(NE) they had purchased from Jacob Goldberg in 1878, to the Synod of the Diocese of Ontario. Maberly's St. Albans Anglican church was built on that plot the following year.

Lazarus proved to have a talent for business and in 1895, after he had moved to Montreal, became president of W.R. Cuthbert & Company, brass founders who, between 1896 and 1906, formed the first Jewish dredging firm in Canada³¹. They had a fleet of dredges and a government contract to deepen almost every tributary of the St. Lawrence River between Lake Ontario and Quebec.³²

Lazarus was also a trustee and president of the McGill College Avenue Synagogue (Congregation Shaar Hashomayim), an officer of Baron de Hirsch Institute, president of the Montreal Lodge of B'nai Brith and was instrumental in building the Hebrew Free School on St. Urbain Street in Montreal. Lazarus Cohen was a pious Jew and passionate Zionist.

²⁹ The common surname 'Garmaise' would suggest that Lazarus and Fischel had married sisters or cousins.

³⁰ *Canadian Jewish Times*, September 1, 1899.

³¹ The Canada Improvement Company.

³² *Various Positions: A Life of Leonard Cohen*, by Ira Bruce Nadel (1997).

*Four years before the First Zionist Congress convened at Basel [Switzerland] in 1897 and declared as its aim 'establishing for the Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine', Lazarus Cohen had already visited the land and purchased parts of it in the hope of future settlement.*³³

After being chosen in 1893 by the Chovevei Zion Society in Montreal, Lazarus had made his way to Palestine 1894 where he acquired land, and at the same time reported on the potential for establishing a Jewish colony there. He also visited Paris to speak on colonization matters.

In addition to Lazarus and Fischel, four other Cohen siblings came to Canada from Lithuania in the 1870s and 1880s, the later of these probably driven out of their homeland by pogroms encouraged by the Russian government fixing blame on the Jews for the 1881 assassination of Tsar Alexander II.³⁴

Jacob Cohen (1850-1950) arrived in Canada sometime in the mid-1870s³⁵. He married Fanny Livingstone (c1854-1925), who had emigrated to Canada from Russian Poland at about the same time³⁶. They were married c1874, but whether the marriage took place in Europe or in Canada is undetermined. Jacob and Fanny settled in Montreal, where census records show that Jacob was, at various times, a clothier (1901 & 1911), manufacturer (1921) and merchant (1927). Jacob and Fanny were the parents of 11 children, all born in Canada between about 1875 and 1898. In 1905 Jacob paid a return visit to Russia and saw his father, Chaim Cohen Kats, for the first time in 35 years.³⁷

Bessie/Betsy Cohen (b.1858) reached Canada between 1879 and 1882³⁸. She married Moses Coviensky (b.c1859) in about 1883. He had been born in Germany or Russia and emigrated in about 1880. Moses was variously a commercial traveller in dry goods (1891), a tailor (1891), shop owner (1911) and second-hand dealer (1921). They lived in Montreal and had nine children all born in Canada between 1884 and 1900.

Dora/Deborah Cohen (b.1859), with her husband Fischel Phillips (c1858-1914), emigrated to Canada in about 1885 and settled in Montreal. They had been married in about 1878, probably in England where their first two children were born in 1879 and 1883. Fischel had been born in Germany or Russia and in Canada worked as a commercial traveller. Deborah and Fischel were also the parents of six more children born in Canada between 1886 and 1898.

Tzvi-Hirsch (1862-1950), the youngest sibling, did not arrive in Canada until 1889. Like Lazarus, Rabbi Tzvi-Hirsch Cohen had been educated at Etz Chaim Yeshiva, Valozhyn, where he studied Talmud, modern Hebrew, and Yiddish literature. He gained his smicha (rabbinical ordination) in Vilna and Valozhyn.

³³ *Broken Hallelujah: Rock and Roll, Redemption, and the Life of Leonard Cohen*, by Liel Leibovitz (2014) ISBN 978-0-393-35073-9

³⁴ At this time there was a large migration of Lithuanian Jews to the United States and South Africa.

³⁵ Census records report different immigration years; 1901 (1875), 1911 (1878), 1921 (1871).

³⁶ Census records report different immigration years; 1901 (1875), 1911 (1896), 1921 (1875).

³⁷ *Canadian Jewish Times*, November 17, 1905.

³⁸ Census records report different immigration years; 1901 (1879), 1911 (1882), 1921 (1880).

Hirsch first tried to establish a grocery business in Montreal, but the endeavor was not a success. He moved on to Chicago where he trained in the kosher meat industry, before returning to Montreal in 1896 and beginning his rabbinical career. In time, he became president of the Va'ad Ha-Rabbanim (Rabbinical Council) of the Va'ad Ha'ir (Montreal Jewish Community Council). He was active in the Central War Sufferers Relief Society during World War I providing aid to Jews in Europe and Palestine, the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, and the Mizrahi movement for Orthodox Zionists. He served as president of the Montreal Council of Orthodox Rabbis and was an executive member of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. Rabbi Tzvi-Hirsch Cohen was recognized as the unofficial Chief Rabbi of both Montreal and Canada.³⁹

*... a thorough Hebrew scholar, speaks several languages, and has an intimate knowledge of the circumstances in which his co-religionists are placed, in this and other countries.*⁴⁰

Pathfinder Lazarus Eliezer Cohen, Lithuanian Jewish immigrant, Maberly Ontario merchant, Montreal entrepreneur, and leading figure in the early Canadian Jewish community, died at Montreal in 1914. His wife, Fraidie Garmaise-Cohen, died at Montreal in 1925.

Lyon Yehuda Cohen (1868-1937)

Lazarus and Fraidie Cohen's eldest son, Lyon Yehuda, who had been born at Budvieciai, Polish Lithuania, in 1868, grew up at Maberly, Ontario, but received his higher education in Montreal at McGill Model School and the Catholic Commercial Academy.

In 1891 Lyon was described in the census as a *"traveller in fancy goods"*, but shortly thereafter 'Lee & Cohen, Coal Merchants' became 'L. Cohen & Son, Coal Merchants & Dredging Contractors', when his father took Lyon into the family business. Lyon would go on to become owner of one of Montreal's largest clothing corporations, the 'Freedman Company', and take over management of 'W. R. Cuthbert & Co., Brass Founders'. He also organized and became president of 'Canadian Export Clothiers, Ltd.', and was a founder of the *Jewish Times*, the first Jewish paper in Canada.

*In the late fifties, Lyon's grandson Leonard briefly worked at the foundry and in the shipping department of the Freedman Company.*⁴¹

In the public sphere Lyon Cohen played a leading role in every Jewish organization of note. He was Secretary of the Jewish Rights Committee, organized to obtain equal rights for Jewish children in Public Schools⁴²; President of the Baron de Hirsch Institute; Chairman, Committee to Federate Jewish Charities; President of the First Canadian Jewish Congress; President of the Montefiore Club; President of the B'nai B'rith Lodge; Treasurer of the Hebrew Citizenship Association; Honorary President of the Y.M.H.A.; Honorary President of New Adath Jeshurun Congregation; Honorary Vice-President of the Zionist Organization of Canada; President of the Associated Jewish War Relief Societies of Canada; President of Congregation

³⁹ From an article by Marian Pinsky.

⁴⁰ *Canadian Jewish Times*, September 9, 1904.

⁴¹ *Various Positions: A Life of Leonard Cohen*, by Ira Bruce Nadel (1997).

⁴² Under the deal struck, Jewish children were designated 'honorary Protestants'.

Shaar Hashomayim; President of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, Montreal; and Canadian Committee Chairman of the Jewish Colonization Association of Paris.

He was also a Governor of Montreal General Hospital and Notre-Dame Hospital; a Director of the Civic Improvement League; a Director of the Boys' Farm and Training School, Shawbridge, Quebec; Treasurer of the Montreal Reform Club and Treasurer of the Liberal Party in Montreal.

In 1891 Lyon married Rachel Friedman (1872-1959)⁴³, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Noah Friedman, with whom he had four children: Nathan Bernard (1891-1943), Horace Rivier (1895-1984), Lawrence Zebulum/Zebulon (b.1900), Delora Sylvia Lilian or Delora Sarah Leah (b.1910).

On the occasion of the 1904 Bar Mitzvah of his oldest son, Nathan Bernard, Lyon Cohen presented a Chanukkiah (menorah) to Congregation Shaar Hashomayim. Cast by the Cohen owned 'W. R. Cuthbert Brass Foundry', that Chanukkiah is the earliest known Canadian-made ceremonial menorah and is now on display at the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue's Edward Bronfman Museum.



Lyon Yehuda Cohen 1867-1937

Lyon Yehuda Cohen died in 1937 at Orchard Beach, York County, Maine, USA. Rachel-Friedman Cohen died at Quebec City in 1959.

Abraham Zebulun Cohen (1879-1937)

Maberly born Abraham Zebulun, youngest son of Lazarus and Fraidie Cohen, moved to Montreal with his family in 1883. He studied philosophy at McGill University and graduated in 1900.

As a young man, he joined his father and brother Lyon in the family business, 'L. Cohen & Son', purveyors of "*Clean Coal & Dry Kindling Wood*" and later established himself as a furniture retailer. Abraham was known as "*an orator and scion of the Jewish Community*".⁴⁴

In 1907 he married Malca/Moica Vineberg (1885-1961)⁴⁵, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harris Vineberg, with whom he fathered four children, Arthur E. (b.1908), Riva Leah (1910-1980), Edgar Horace (1913-2006) and Elsa.⁴⁶

Abraham died at Montreal in 1937. Malca/Moica Vineberg-Cohen died in 1961.

⁴³ Daughter of Noah Friedman (1831-1916) and Sarah Trirena Kellert (1833-1916).

⁴⁴ From the obituary of his son Edgar Horace Cohen (1913-2006), *Montreal Gazette*, July 15, 2006.

⁴⁵ Daughter of Harris Vineberg and Lillie Goldberg.

⁴⁶ Some accounts record a second wife, Lena Volinetz (1884-1946), but appear to be in error.

Nathan Bernard Cohen (1891-1944)

Nathan Bernard Cohen, eldest son of Lyon and Rachel Cohen, was born in Montreal in 1891. Something of biblical scholar in his youth, in 1902 Nathan was awarded the John Moss medal for Bible history by the McGill College Avenue Synagogue School.



Nathan Bernard Cohen 1891-1944

He was commissioned a Lieutenant in the regular army and shipped out for England at the end of August 1918. He was sent to 14th Battalion in France in November 1918 but, with the war ended, was ordered back to England just two months later. Returning to Montreal and was released from the army as part of the general demobilization.

Back in Canada following the Great War Nathan resumed his post at the 'Freedman Company', which he took over on his father's death in 1937, and where he worked for the remainder of his life.

In 1927 he married Masha/Marsha Klonitsky/Klinitzky/Kline (1905-1978)⁴⁷. Masha was born at Kaunas, Lithuania, the daughter of a Talmudic scholar, Rabbi Solomon Shlomo Zalman Klonitsky-Kline (c1868-1958) and Esther Marie Charmason (1869-1927). Nathan and Masha were the parents of Esther Frayda (1930-2014) and Leonard Norman (1934-2016).

Nathan studied engineering at university and listed his occupation as 'dredging engineer' when he enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1918. He soon joined his father, Lyon, at the 'Freeman Company' however, a high-end clothing business, known for its formal wear.

Known as 'Natty' Cohen, Nathan was never seen dressed in anything but a fine suit and had a particular penchant for formal dress, including a monocle and spats, which he would often wear even on non-formal occasions. His son, Leonard, would later say that he grew up in a "house of suits", and his father's sartorial example may explain why Leonard almost always performed wearing a dark suit, complete with fedora.

In January 1918, Nathan, who had already served a year as a Corporal in the 56th Westmount Rifles (Militia), and then two years as a Lieutenant with the 4th Field Company, Canadian Engineers, was drafted for service with the Canadian WWI

⁴⁷ Daughter of Solomon Shlomo Zalman Klonitsky Kline (1868-1958) and Esther M. Charmason (1869-1927).

Nathan Cohen died at Montreal at the age of just 53 years in 1944. Although he had served in the Army for less than two years, saw no active service and, according to his military records, suffered only a brief bout of influenza⁴⁸, and in 1919 and was discharged in good health, Bruce Nadel, Leonard Cohen's biographer, wrote that Nathan lived in a "semi-invalid state ... [suffered] *disability or poor health, the result of the war ... had high blood pressure [and] died spitting blood*".⁴⁹

In 1950 Masha Klonitsky-Cohen was re-married, to Harry Ostrow, a Montreal pharmacist, but they separated in 1957. Masha died at Montreal in 1978.

Leonard Norman Cohen (1934-2016)

Born at 599 Belmont Avenue, Montreal, Quebec, to Nathan and Masha Cohen in 1934, Leonard Norman Cohen (Eliezer ben Nisan ha'Cohen) was educated at Roslyn Elementary School, Herzliah High School and Westmount High School, where he studied music and poetry. During his secondary school years he taught himself to play the guitar and formed a country-folk group called the 'Buckskin Boys'.

From 1951 through 1955 he studied at McGill University, during which time he published his first poems in the magazine *CIV/n* (1954). After completing his undergraduate degree, Cohen spent a term in the McGill Faculty of Law and then a year at the Columbia University School of General Studies in New York.

He returned to Montreal in 1957. His father's will provided him a sufficient trust fund to allow pursuit of his literary ambitions, but he also worked at various odd jobs, including at the family owned 'Cuthbert & Co., Brass Foundry', and 'Freedman Company' while writing fiction and poetry, including the poems for his book, *The Spice-Box of Earth* (1961).

Through the 1960s he lived as a semi-recluse at a house he purchased on the Greek island of Hydra, where he continued to write poetry and fiction; *Flowers For Hitler* (1964), *The Favourite Game* (1963) and *Beautiful Losers* (1966). Thereafter it would be two decades before more books followed; *Death of a Lady's Man* (1978), *Book of Mercy* (1984), *Stranger Music* (1993) and *Book of Longing* (2006).

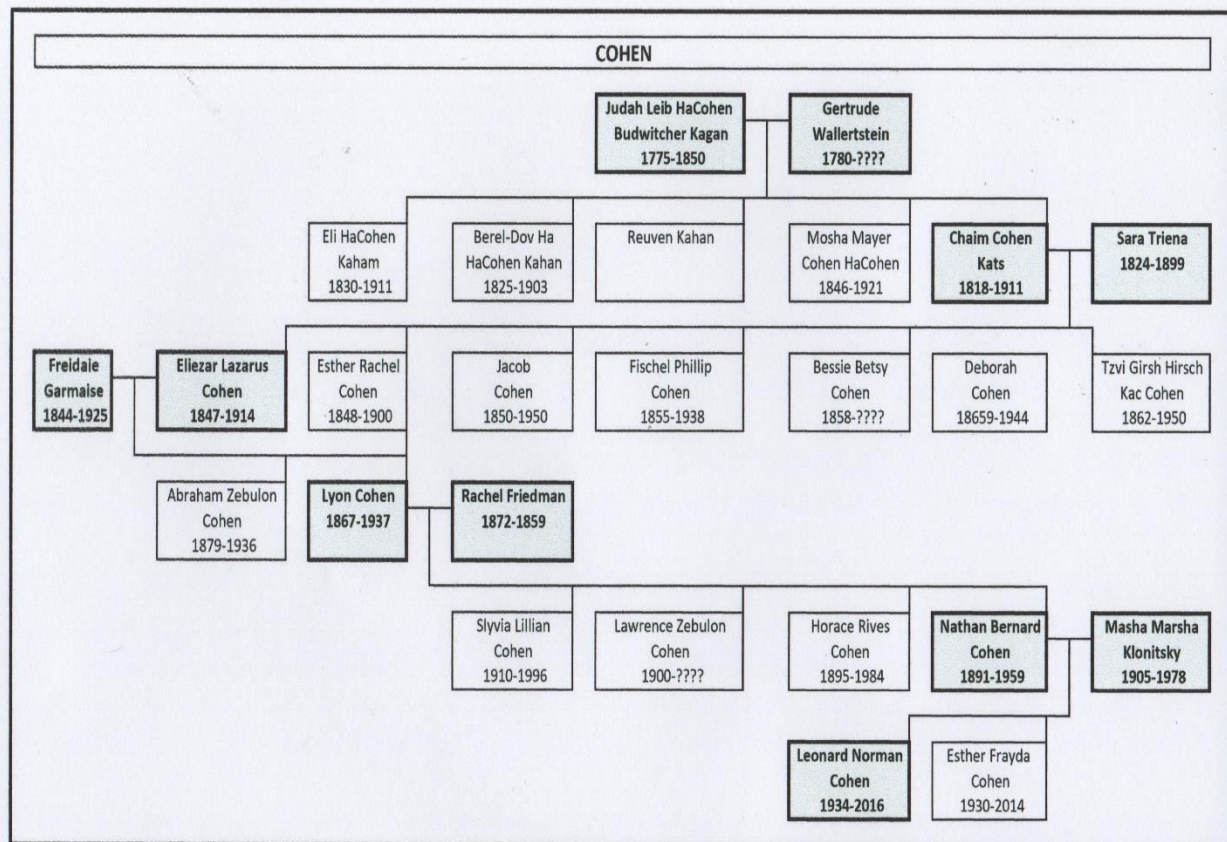


Leonard Norman Cohen 1934-2016

⁴⁸ March 1919.

⁴⁹ *Various Positions: A Life of Leonard Cohen*, by Ira Bruce Nadel (1997).

Frustrated by his lack of financial success as a writer, in 1967 Cohen moved to the United States to try his hand as a singer-songwriter. His first album, *Songs of Leonard Cohen*, was released in 1967 and was followed by 13 more through *You Want it Darker* in 2016.



Cohen toured world-wide, became a Canadian and international arts institution, and the recipient of multiple awards, including The Governor General’s Award for Poetry or Drama (1968); Canadian Author’s Association Literary Award for Poetry (1986); Governor General’s performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement (1993) and Prince of Asturias Award for Literature (2011).

He won four Juno Awards for his album *Ten New Songs* (2002), and Junos for Songwriter of the Year (1994), Artist of the Year (2013) and Album of the Year (2015). He also received a Genie Award for Best Original Song (1986), a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award (2010), the Glen Gould Prize for Contributions to Music and Communications (2011), a Brit Award for International Male Solo Artist (2017) and, nearly two years after his death, a Grammy Award for ‘Best Rock Performance’, for *You Want It Darker* (2018).

In 1991 he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada, and in 2008 a Companion of the Order of Canada (2008) and Grand officer of the National Order of Quebec.

Leonard Cohen never married but fathered two children, Adam (b.1972)⁵⁰ and Lorca (b.1974), with his lover of many years, Suzanne Elrod (b.1945).

Leonard Cohen died at Los Angeles, California, in 2016 at the age of 82-years; but, as was his wish, he was buried with his ancestors, Lazarus, Lyon and Nathan, in the Cohen family plot in Shaar Hashomayim Congregation Cemetery on Mount Royal, in Montreal.

In a 2016 *New Yorker* interview, looking back on an immigrant family founded at Maberly, Ontario, Leonard Cohen observed, *“My family was decent. They were good people; they were handshake people”*.⁵¹

- **Ron W. Shaw (2020)**

⁵⁰ Also a musician.

⁵¹ The *New Yorker*, October 17, 2016.