

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
— of —
WILLIAM FRANK
1819 1898

(The above was written by 1855-
his son, Isaac W. Frank, 1930
as well as some
notes herrib. At top
of p. 1. The note is by
Wm. K. Frank 1890-1964 -
his grandson)
Jaf.

TRANSLATED AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
WILLIAM FRANK - 1819-1891

WRITTEN IN 1889, IN GERMAN AND TRANSLATED BY HIS SON
ISAAC N. FRANK. MATERIAL IN BRACKETS SUPPLIED BY I. W. F.

I was born the sixteenth day of April, 1819, or on the eighth day of Passover, which day I always celebrated as my birthday.

Born in ~~Burgspach~~^{BURGSPACH} Township, Hopfheim near Bamberg, Bavaria.

As early as ten years of age I was put to work to earn my living, bringing fish from Hasfort which was four stunden (German distance measure) from my village, and must return by daylight, and often carried 80 to 100 fish, on which I earned two to three kreutzer.

When I was thirteen years old I went with my Father to market and Messen (fairs) to sell goods. At the age of fourteen I was arrested by police and was taken to the magistrate at "Ehren" and was sentenced three days to jail on bread and water because I had not started to learn a trade.

After this I was apprenticed to a shoemaker. I was there two weeks when my master gave me a pair of stinking boots to mend. I threw the boots down and said "if the farmers want their boots mended they should do it themselves", and thereupon ran away.

I then apprenticed for three years to Solomon Selig, ~~an~~ Schweinfurt, as cotton goods weaver, for which my Father paid 30 gulden for tuition. After completion I remained with my master six months as journeyman weaver.

When I started to travel to the larger cities of Bavaria and worked as journeyman, the first place employed was in Bieberich near Wuertzburg by a christian with whom I had lodging, but ate my meals with Jews.

I did not work on Saturdays, and usually had my dinner with a Mr. Adler, who later went to Philadelphia and became President of Rodef Shalom Congregation in that city.

After working in Bieberich one year, I started out to travel as "Handwerksbush" and secured employment with Aaron Hess in Halleivich (?). After six months, Aschaffenburg, Frankfurt, Mains, Worms, Darmstadt, Manheim, Heidelberg, Landau, Speir and many smaller towns and villages.

I saved more money out of my earnings this way than if I had worked at my trade. In all my travel I did not eat "Trefe" (not according to ritual), and was in excellent health.

Again I worked at my trade in Edencohn, Rhein-Pfaltz with a Christian and again had my meals with Jews. After six months I began to think of journeying to blessed America - going home to say good-bye to my parents and brother and sister.

After leaving home, I set out for Wuertzburg where I had left my "Wanderbuch" (traveling book) with the police, who wrote in it permission to return to Edecobern with instructions that if I went farther to take the book and return it to Wuertzburg and to arrest me.

I went to Landau which is in Rhein Bavaria where I had a cousin by the name of Abraham Frank. I told him I wanted to go to Weisenberg in France (Lorain). I showed him my "Wunderbuch", but he said he thought he could arrange it with the stage driver so that I would have no trouble. The driver put my "Wunderbuch" (traveling pack) in his fodder bag, and when we reached the border, said to the officer "that I was a Weisburger" and he let me pass without further trouble.

On arriving at Weisenberg, I immediately went to the ship's agent and procured a ships contract from Havre to New York. Then journeying to Strassburg, Metz, Paris, where I remained three days, to Havre, going directly to ships office, was informed that the ship had not yet arrived and that it would be thirty days. This was sad news for me, as French was only spoken and I did not understand it, and anyway had not calculated in the delay and did not have enough money to wait so long. I took lodging where I paid 15 sue, about 24¢ for sleeping only without food.

I wandered about, finally discovering a store where German was spoken and went in, which proved to be a hardware establishment. I asked for the proprietor and told him my predicament. He gave me credit for knives, forks and spoons, and I was to pay him every night for my sales, which I did, and thereby earned my lodging and meals, also enough to purchase zwiback, wine, coffee and tobacco and other necessary things for the ships journey. The proprietor wanted me to remain with him and promised that I would have America in France, and had it not been that I had paid my ships fare, I would have likely remained in Havre.

The ship, The Great Eagle, a large sailing vessel sailed at end of thirty days. I was on the ship only one hour when I became violently sea-sick, which lasted three days, during which I wished many times that I had remained in Havre. I was quite well during the remainder of the journey which was forty-nine days, landing in New York on May 1st, 1840.

Here again I had a cousin living by the name of Frank. I hunted him up and remained with him over night. He loaned me three dollars with which to reach Philadelphia where my step-brother, Philip Frank, lived. He was a shoemaker and had several journeymen working for him. He had a nice business but was a poor manager, and his wife could spend more than three men could earn. He had made his start by peddling merchandise, and had about four dollars worth of odds and ends in a handkerchief, which he gave me to sell. I remained in Philadelphia seven weeks and purchased additional goods each day; paid my lodging three dollars per week to my sister-in-law. She did not want to accept it, but I told her I came to America to earn my own living, and if she did not take it, I would go to a boarding house.

During these weeks I made the acquaintance and purchased goods from Blum & Simpson who gave me credit for goods to the extent of \$100.00 to go peddling out of the city. I peddled in Lancaster County one year and sent my parents seven hundred (\$700.00) dollars for them and my sister Babet and brother Moses to come to America with. They came, but my sainted Mother lived only six months after arrival.

BACHELOR

Before the family came, I had gone in partnership with David Strasburger in Kilgore, Carroll County, O. where we kept store and "Bachelor Hall" for a time, when Strasburger married, and we moved to Franklin, Harrison County.

As was my custom to purchase goods, I made a journey to Philadelphia, traveling by steamer from Steubenville to Pittsburgh, then by stage to Harrisburg. During the trip my boots hurt me and my feet were swollen, so I took them off, and also lost my hat during one of the nights travel. We arrived at Harrisburg for breakfast, I carrying my boots, and hatless.

On the train from Philadelphia sat a young man who, no doubt, observing that I was a follower of Abraham, moved next to me, and during conversation covering many subjects, he said he could scarcely await the train's arrival in Lancaster, as he had been married six weeks before and had been away several weeks.

DREYFUSS

I told him that if I could meet a desirable girl, I would like to marry also. He said "if I would stop at Lancaster he would introduce me to his wife's cousin who was living with them, and that he knew she would make a good wife. (The man, Uncle & Aunt Deyfess) - i. w. f. I permitted myself to be persuaded and stopped over at Lancaster for one night; purchased a hat and went with my new friend to his home to see the girl, who seemed to suit me.

Next day I started for Philadelphia, and with me her brother Ephraim Wormser. They had one uncle by the name of Rauh, a "Rabbi" in Philadelphia, of whom I made some inquiries.

On arriving at my brother's home, my sister-in-law congratulated me on my engagement. I told her I knew of no engagement. She said she had met a man by the name of Katzenstein who told her to tell me that his sister (my bride) had arrived from Germany in New York, and that when I came, to tell me to go to New York to marry her, if I met with his approval. I told her I knew nothing of the affair and would not go to New York, but that I had other ideas and that I had seen a young lady in Lancaster who suited me and I think I can get her.

Ha-Shana

As it was Rosh Hashana, I attended the Synagogue where I met Wormser also. After service he invited me and we went to a saloon for a glass of beer. In the course of conversation he asked me "What do you think of my sister?". I said "I had made inquiries about her and that if she would have me, I would be willing to marry her". He said "he made inquiries concerning me and that they were satisfactory, and believed that if I would write to his sister, that she would accept me".

I wrote a letter in that saloon. What it was, I am too modest to say, as I had never written a love letter before, as I was 23 years old and had to provide a living since my tenth year. No love affairs entered my mind. I received an answer the following day, and to my great luck the answer was favorable. Fourteen days later Uncle Rauh married us on Oct. 18th, 1843 at Lancaster, Pa. - Paulina Wormser to William Frank.

When we arrived at Franklin, Mr. Strasburger came to the carriage. I introduced him saying "this is my Wife". He said he thought there was something of that kind taking place,

as I had remained away so long. As we entered the room, I said to Mrs. Strasburger "this is my wife", and she said "but it is not my sister. We had written to Philadelphia that you should bring my sister". I said "I had not received such a letter".

A few days later I met a lawyer who said that my partner wanted to sue me for breach of promise for not marrying his sister-in-law. The lawyer asked me if I had written, but I told him "no, that Strasburger had written unknown to me", so he said that Strasburger should marry her himself.

After we had been home sometime, I left at times to peddle, as I was well acquainted and could dispose of considerable merchandise, and during my absence, my wife went into the store and was a successful saleslady, but on returning one time she said she would not tend store unless I was at home, as she did not get along with Mr. Strasburger complaining. When she said to a customer the price was 18¢, he said it was 20¢, and other complaints. I did not blame her, but asked her to wait until we had paid our debts, then I would make short work of the partnership.

One day Strasburger said to me "you married a fine lady, but she would not attend sales any more." I told him she was right, as he disputed her sales, and was otherwise disagreeable.

In the early winter we bought geese to hold and fatten. On a Sunday morning soon after Mr. Strasburger knocked loudly at our door and said "Frank get up we will kill the geese today". I said "they are not fat yet and we bought them for that purpose". He said "you can keep yours and charge yourself with a bushel of corn they eat". This riled me, and I said "I know of a better thing to do". "What" says he. I said "we will 'kill' partnership, then you can kill your geese when you want to and I can do likewise". He asked me if I was in earnest, and I assured him I was.

Inasmuch as he had married a year before, and all expense was shared in common; and you want to charge me with a bushel of corn costing 18¢? "Well" he said, "if you are in earnest, we will get at it at once". We agreed that we would divide anything that was dividable, and the things not so, we would draw lots, which we reduced to writing. We carried out this plan until it came to the sign "Strasburger & Frank" which had cost two dollars. I said he could have my half for \$1.00. He said "No, we have divided all else, we will divide the sign also". So we sawed it in two; he getting Strasburger and I, & Frank.

From Franklin we moved to Jefferson, Harrison County, and opened a store there in the Spring, and here our (1847) Hyman was born. The second Summer there we were visited by a young man by the name of Hart. We took a ride in the afternoon, and when we were near his home, our horse took fright and threw us out of the buggy, and my wife had her arm broken. It was quite serious, and she was laid up two months, and a month later our second son Ephriam was born.

In March 1846 we moved to Pittsburgh. We were there but six months when Ephriam died and we buried him in the Troy Hill Cemetery which Mr. Strasburger, Emanuel Reis

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probably
the born
(See above
to Martin 1850) may have been moved from Franklin*

and I had recently purchased for the congregation, "Beth Shalom" of which we were the earliest members; it being the first Jewish congregation in Pittsburgh. Later when the congregation became mixed and Mr. Wm. Armhold (1854) was the reader, the Polanders wanted a reader from Baltimore who had a wife and children in Poland, and we wanted to retain Mr. Armhold.

I resigned as a member, then Wormser, Strasburger, Gallinger, Meyer and others, and by night we had organized a new congregation which I named Rodef Shalom (seek Peace), inasmuch as we desired peace. We retained Mr. Armhold until after the dedication of our Temple in Hancock St. in 1861. We had previously engaged Josiah Cohen as an English Teacher. I was President of the Temple when it was dedicated.

Our son Martin died when one year old, 1850, and is buried in Troy Hill Cemetery as is also a stillborn child.

In 1847 Louis Jaraslowsky and I started the Hebrew Benevolent Society, and it has been kept up under that name until this day. (Father was active in its affairs and worked for membership until he died, Sept. 22d, 1894).

Immediately on arriving in Pittsburgh, I rented a store on Market St. between 3d and 4th Aves. where Mother assisted to good advantage for several years, when our growing family claimed all her time.

We moved from over the store to Third Ave., then to 30 Second Ave. and in 1865 moved to Mt. Washington. There were then living Hyman, Samuel, Julia, Abraham and Isaac, and from this home were married in 1879 Hyman to Bertha Elitz of Detroit, Julia to Moses Oppenheimer of Pittsburgh, Samuel to Ettie Klein of Kittanning in 1870, Isaac to Tinnie Klee 1883, Abraham to Anna Ohlman of Meadville in 1884. We lived in this home until the Fall of 1884, moving to Beach St., Allegheny (where Mother died, Dec. 8th, 1910).

Wormser and I were partners for 19 years as drygoods merchants and glass manufacturers. The works were built at Frankstown which was named after me, in 1858. I continued in the glass business with sons Hyman, Sam & Abe until 1876 when the factory burned and was not rebuilt.

The foregoing I wrote after my 70th birthday on the Jahrzeit of my sainted Mother who was only 56 years old when she died. My Father died at 84. Was outlived by his third wife, Mother of Henrietta (Mrs. Lowenstein of Philadelphia) and Julia, both dead.

On July 23d, 1889 we met with a great sorrow in the death by accident of our beloved Nannie, daughter of our children Moses and Julia, and of all our children or acquaintances she was the loveliest and most promising child that I had known. When she grew older, was loved by all, young and old, as she was a good soul; very friendly to every one - rich or poor, and was very charitable, quiet and unostentatious.

It was always a pleasure to be giving to her. She had a large funeral; the service being conducted by Dr. Mayer who spoke very feelingly, describing her as she was. Peace to her soul.

We must be consoled, but it will be a difficult task. We will never forget her.

My Wife was in Sagertown for her health and had our granddaughter Jeanette with her. I had been there three days visiting her and was on my way home, stopping at Meadville intending to remain with Ohlmans over night. After twelve I went to Mr. Ohlman's store where I received a telegram from Jeanette to go home immediately as Hannie was very ill. I looked for the worst, as I knew that if she was only sick they would not have telegraphed. The next day Mother, Jeanette and Mr. Ohlman came home.