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Gins Family History

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Researchers:

Boris Dralyuk, C. Phil.

Vicky Mlyniec

Sara Guins

Katherine Guins

Juliana Marin

Susan L. Morris

Gins family research

Coordinator

Technical support

Alexandra Morris

155 Rincon Street
Ventura, California 93001
(805) 746-6432 cell

Research News

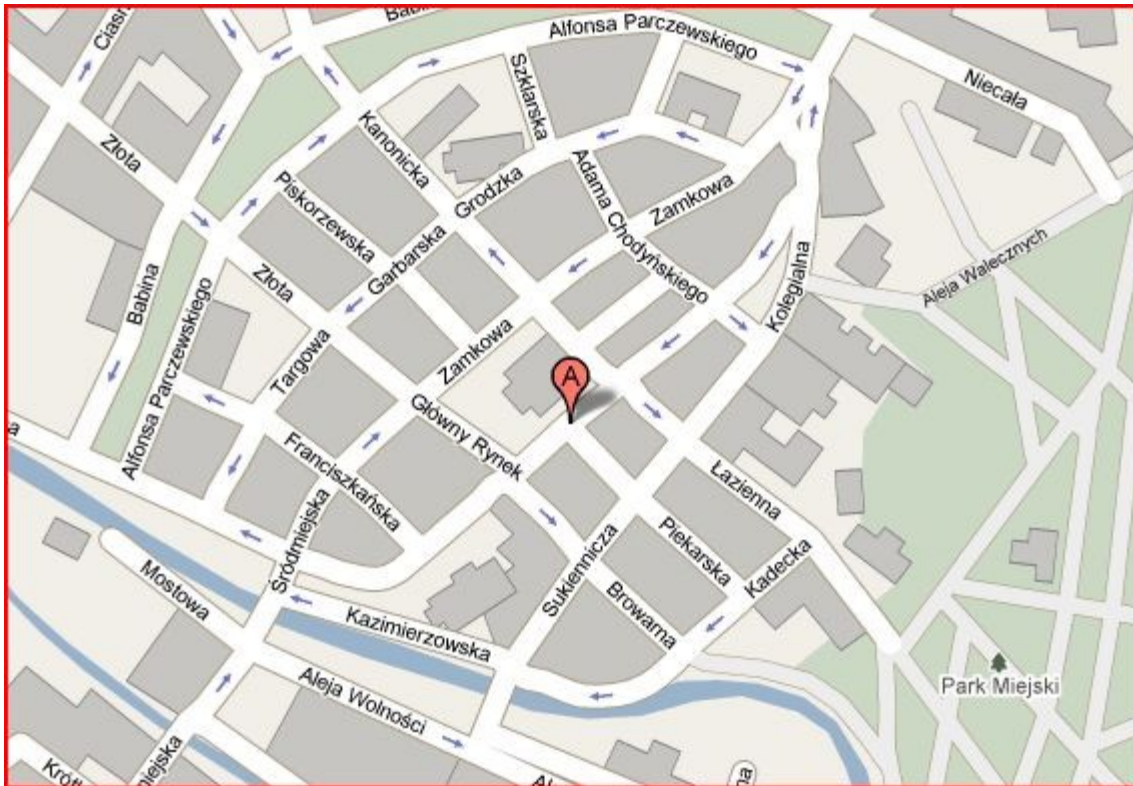
One of the great pleasures and privileges of family history research is actually getting to handle documents, photographs, awards and other items that belonged to our ancestors. Some of the most remarkable records and items that have passed through our hands recently have been military service records, medals, award certificates, and photos of Gins males in officer uniforms. These artifacts speak volumes about commitment to country and personal sacrifice.

In this issue we'll focus on one of the most significant obligations, and obstacles to survival, that our European ancestors faced: that of military service.

Through Boris' translations of military service records, letters, photo captions along with secondary source reports, we'll examine the ways the Gins males and close relatives served the Imperial Russian government and learn how, and whether, they survived the momentous events of the early 20th century.



Dmitrij Konstantinovich Gins with his wife, Eugenia *nee* Nebelschi. Photograph courtesy of Juliana Marin in Bucharest, Romania. Juliana is the great-great granddaughter of Dmitrij and Eugenia Gins. Dmitrij was an officer in the Tsar's court, according to Juliana.



Map of central **Kalisz, Poland**, showing the location of Główny (Main) Rynek Street, which flows around 3 sides of the town square. According to the birth certificates, the **Gins family lived at 25 Rynek Street** from 1814–1816 and again in 1823. And from Aleksander's 1821 birth certificate, we also know that the **Gins family moved to 311 Piskorzewska Street**, northwest of the square.

The Streets Where They Lived...

Gins Siblings Polish Birth Certificates

Translations by Boris Dralyuk, C.Phil

The copies of the Polish birth certificates for Morits Emil Ludvigov Gins' siblings that I obtained through the LDS (Mormon) library system have yielded a number of fascinating additional details that help us gain a greater understanding of our Polish family background. Through Boris' translations of all 8 documents, we've discovered that Morits Emil had 2 sisters (Fryderyka, b. 1814, and Rozalia, b. 1815) and he was one of 6 brothers (Manas, b. 1816; Julius, b. 1819; Aleksander, b. 1821; Bernhard, b. 1823; Leopold, b. 1825; and Morits, b. 1827).

Lipman Gins, father of all 8 children, was listed on the certificates with an age that was inconsistent with a single birth year, so that his birth could be anywhere from 1774 - 1779. Since he was listed as 51 on Morits' certificate in 1827, that puts Lipman's birth year for that certificate at 1776 — which is 10 years younger than a previous (LDS) record indicated.

Mother Fryderika was similarly listed with an age that placed her birth somewhere between 1787-1793. She's entered on Morits' certificate as 34, making her birth year 1793. Her name also took on many forms in the certificates: Rebeka *nee* Baroch (Barach), Ryka *nee* Holtz, Fryderyka *nee* Holtz, Frederyka *nee* Baroch-Holtz, and eventually, Fryderika Gins.

Other fascinating facts include father's occupation: Lipman was described as a Kalisz merchant [*Pol.* "kupiec"] on all of the certificates except for Morits, where he appeared as a Collector [*Pol.* "Kolektor"]. And on daughter Fryderyka's certificate, Lipman was further described as being of the Mosaic faith [*Pol.* "Mojeszowego wyznania"] — as Boris says: a lovely euphemism! In line with this note, there are markings at the bottom of the certificates that Boris believes to be Yiddish signatures of the witnesses.

Finally, one of the real breakthroughs from the translation of all of the certificates is that five of them listed two street addresses where the Gins family lived in Kalisz! And as you can see from the above map, those streets, if not the exact street numbers, are still in existence today.

Officers and Gentlemen

Translations by Boris Dralyuk, C.Phil.

The nobles of Imperial Russia — those with titles (prince, baron, count), ancient noble families (tracing nobility 100 years), hereditary nobles, and personal nobles — constituted just 1.3% of the Empire's population, yet owned most of the land. While the nobility were granted definite advantages — the right to own populated estates chief among them — their privileges came with specific obligations, that at times carried very serious consequences.

When Peter the Great reorganized the Russian military based on European models, the army began drafting soldiers for lifelong terms from among the taxpaying population, and drew its officers from the nobility. Nobles were required to give lifelong service to the state, either in the military or through civil administration.

Many Gins family members and close male relatives in the late 19th and early 20th centuries heeded the call to military service and attended elite military training sites, such as Khabarovsk Military Academy in the East near Vladivostok (George



Mikhail Vladimirovich Gins (inset) and brother Leonid Vladimirovich Gins both attended an elite military academy. Mikhail was killed in 1917 fighting the Germans during World War I; Leonid perished during the Civil War that followed. From what appears to be a crossed cannon pin on the shoulder boards [Rus. "pogoni"] of Leonid's jacket, Leonid may have been an officer with an artillery unit.

Aleksandr Guins), and Pavlovsk Military Academy in St. Petersburg (Boris Nikolaevich Bekkarevich, married to Vera Vladimirovna Gins). Once they completed their military education and training, they entered various branches of the army — infantry, cavalry, artillery, trains — and moved up the ranks, starting as junior officers.

That many of the Gins military members survived their service is nothing short of miraculous, given that they were not only engaged in battles prior to and including World War I, but also the Revolution and the ensuing Civil War. Some, like Dmitriy Konstantinovich Gins, who headed south to Romania, were able to evade capture by Red Army factions. His brother, Nikolaj, a Staff Captain in the 31st Siberian Artillery Regiment, also escaped, ending up in central Siberia during the Civil War, but had to endure years of separation from loved ones in Harbin. Their father, Konstantin, was not as fortunate. He was a Staff Captain at the fortress in Novogeorgievsk (now Modlin, Poland), when he became gravely ill. He returned to his parents in Kiev, where he died in 1891.

Other Gins family members didn't even graduate from a military academy before they came under fire. The following is a first person account by George Aleksandr Guins, who managed to emigrate to the U.S. in 1923 at age 16. His story appeared in 1938 in the Oregon News-Telegram newspaper:

"My father was an officer under the czar. My uncle was minister of agriculture. As a boy I was sent to the West Point of Russia at Chabarovsk. Only an army officer's son could get in there. I hadn't been there long when the revolution came along, and



Vladimir Mikhailovich Gembitskij, son of Mikhail Barfolomeevich Gembitskij and Anna nee Gins, in Parade uniform. Vladimir is wearing a double-breasted uniform jacket called a "mundir" with a "plastron" (from which hangs his ribbon/medal). His style of epaulettes indicate that he is likely a lieutenant [Rus. "poruchik"] of the Life-Guard Cuirassier (cavalry), His Majesties Regiment.

the revolutionists shelled the school. I escaped and started for Vladivostok, where I was born. My folks were in a white army stronghold in the Mongolian desert — my father had been governor of the province of Semipalatinsk — and when I could not reach them I joined the white army in Vladivostok. (continues on p. 4)



Gembitskij family, from left:: Anna (daughter of Morits Emil Gins), son Vladimir, grandson, daughter Maria, and husband, Mikhail Barfolomeevich Gembitskij. Mikhail was a Colonel [Rus. "Polkovnik"] in 1908-1909, commanding the 169th Novo-Trokskij Infantry Regiment.

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Officers and Gentlemen

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“That was the only place still held by white Russians, but the reds got nearer and nearer. Finally, the only thing we could do was to capture a ‘navy’ of 15 boats designed for fishing torpedoes out of the water.

“Two thousand of us sailed out as the reds moved in. On the coast north of Vladivostok we collected revenue from Japanese who were loading Russian lumber. The Japanese were taking lumber while the Russians fought, but we had guns and enforced a demand for revenue.

“Having that money, we turned south to China, Korea and Japan. Six boats sunk on the way to the first port. They wouldn’t let us out anywhere, but traded supplies for money.

“Only seven boats were left when we reached Shanghai, and there was no welcome there, so we continued toward the Philippines, where we were allowed to remain. There were only five boats and 200 passengers left when we arrived in Manila.

“The governor wrote to President Harding of our plight, and the president thought it would create a good impression of the country’s displeasure with the revolution if he let us into the United States. So the government sent a transport to pick up those who were physically fit — and 125 of the 200 were eliminated. Some had lost their minds because of the hardships on the trip, and others lost their health.”

George’s account of his extraordinary adventure reveals traits that we’ve come to recognize in the Gin’s family, namely courage, resourcefulness, determination and resilience. And it’s these same characteristics that the Gins relatives brought to bear in the service of their country as members of the military.

Photos From the Front

Translations by Boris Dralyuk, C. Phil.

Vicky Mlyniec, granddaughter of Nikolaj Konstantinovich Gins, brought a significant treasure to UCLA this spring: her grandfather’s military photo album. At just 6 3/4” x 8”, this red fabric double-sided album contains 36 black and white photographs of immeasurable value to Gins family researchers and historians.

Boris got to work right away, translating Nikolaj’s careful captions, revealing a great deal about Nikolaj’s tour of duty with the 31st Siberian Artillery Regiment as depicted in photos from 1915 to 1917. Nikolaj began his assignment as a lieutenant and was elevated to the rank of Staff Captain in 1917. His unit took part in the battle at Lake Naroch, shot down a German plane and captured German prisoners, and engaged in covert operations.



Lt. Gins at work in the dugout of the regiment staff in the town of Nerashev of Minsk Province in December 1916

Following is a sample of photographs that tell of camaraderie, courage, hardship, and hope.



Front: X— Captain Kurbatov, 1— Lt. Draganov, 2 — Captain Nikitin, 3 — Lt. Sverchkov, 4—Lt. Samirukovich; Left to right (rear): Lt. Bajkov, Lt. Kostin, Lt. Gins, Lt. Jarmak, Lt. Bugatskij. Nikolaj is wearing the thick wool “papaha” (fur cap) that was distinctive to Siberian corps. It was worn loosely and could be pulled down over the ears to protect the neck. Nikolaj is also wearing the traditional “shinel” or soldier’s greatcoat.

Photos From the Front: Nikolaj Konstantinovich Gins Album

An evening party in the army headquarters of the town Eremin, Minsk Province, 1917.

Nikolaj is seated closest to the camera on the right side, with his back to the table.

Boris pointed out that there is a priest with long hair and beard seated in the center of the photograph, somewhat reminiscent of Rasputin.



Spies in white robes



Second half of the regiment. Second in command is Gins and the field commanders Gruzdev and Shitikov.

Nikolaj is seated in the front row in this traditional squadron shot, wearing his dark "papaha" with what appears to be an officer's stamped metal cockade on his fur cap.

Photos From the Front: Nikolaj Konstantinovich Gins Album



Handing out of medals, certificates of recognition, and gifts April 1916



Right: German plane shot down by snipers by the 31st Regiment in October 1915 Popin, Vilnius Province



Burial of the deceased Staff Captain Shanygin, 26th of October 1916 in the town of Turets of Minsk Province