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Gins Family History

Research News

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Welcome to vol. 1, no. 2 of the Gins family newsletter! As you can see, I'm experimenting with a new look and hoping to refine this publication as we go along, so that I'm able to present our notes, photos and graphics in an easy-to-follow format.

We've had a very productive month of research and document translations and I am happy to present the results of the past few weeks to you. Boris, in particular, has been working tirelessly, translating hard-to-read handwritten Polish certificates, cramped Russian letters, and Imperial register entries. I think we're all coming to realize that we are extraordinarily fortunate to have the benefit of Boris' wide-ranging research and linguistic skills!



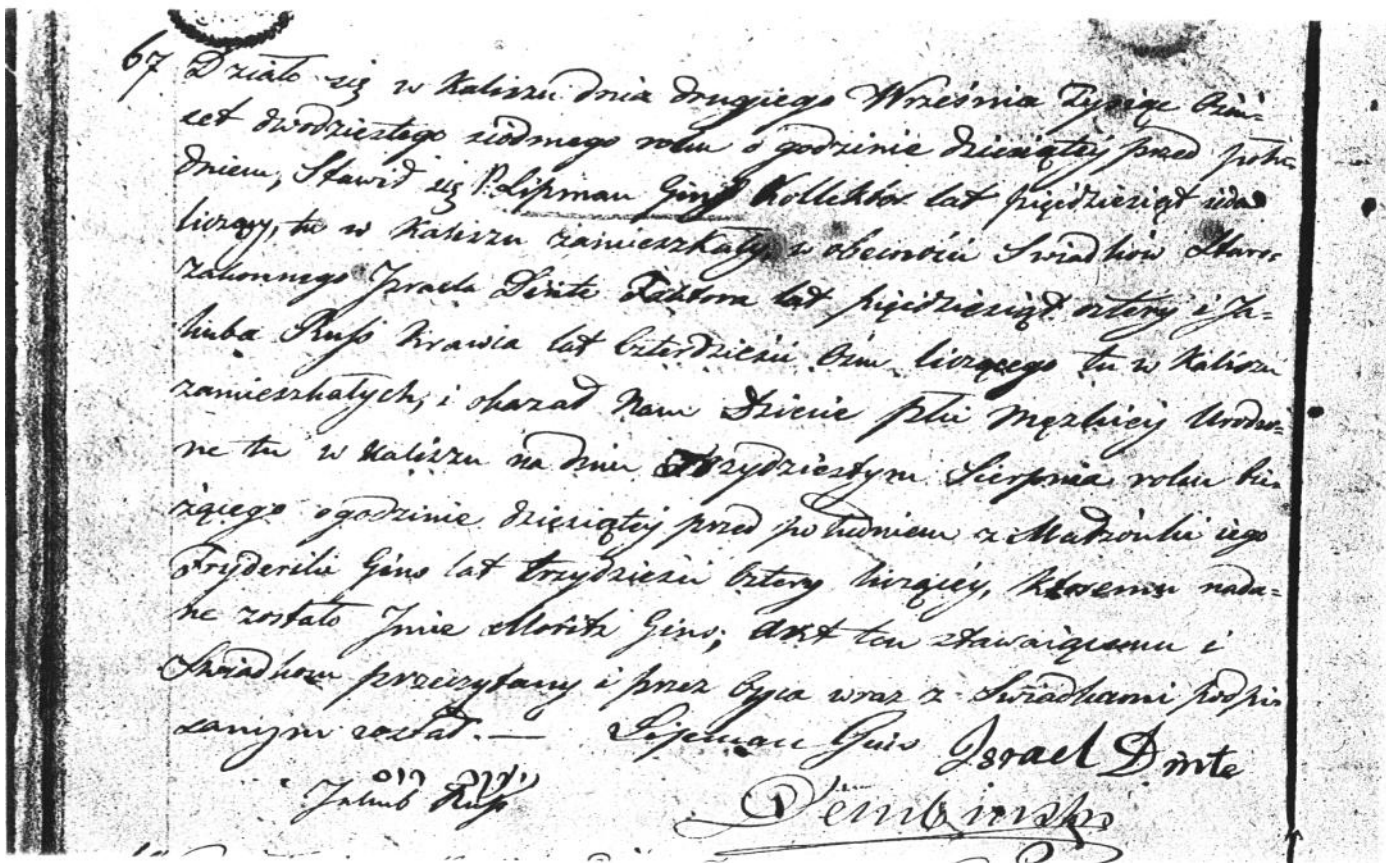
Guins families, relatives and friend in Harbin circa 1928: (from the left) George Guins, Lyuda Prokhmitskaja, Zina Vologodskaja, Seva Guins, Tanya Guins (front, center), Nikolaj Prokhmitskij (behind Tanya), Emilia Guins (front), Julia Guins (back), Sergei Guins, Nikolaj Guins. Photo courtesy of Vicky Mlyniec.

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Susan L. Morris
Gins family researcher

155 Rincon Street
Ventura, California 93001
(805) 746-6432 cell
smorris121@msn.com

Polish Birth Certificate for Moritz Gins, showing a birth date of 30 August 1827, 10 a.m.



Polish Birth Certificates: Gins Siblings

I was able to obtain film copies of the birth certificates for Moritz Gins and his siblings through the LDS (Mormon) Family History Center library order system. These copies have given us birthdates, including days, months, years and even time of birth, for Moritz Gins, and his siblings. These forms also provide such details as father's occupation at the time, age of father and mother, and mother's maiden name (Boruch-Holtz).

You will notice Moritz Gins name on the third line up from the bottom of the certificate, his mother's name, Frydrika Gins, above his, and his father's signature with other witnesses at the bottom of the certificate.

Here lies the mystery — that Moritz Gins' father signed his name Lipman Gins, not Ludwik! Boris has indicated that the name Lipman is a common surname, but rarely used as a given or first name. He surmises that perhaps Ludwik had a double first name, with Lipman added in honor of his maternal grandfather's surname.

Moritz Gins Birth Certificate

Translation by Boris Dralyuk, C.Phil.

[67]

It took place in Kalisz on September 2, 1827, at 10:00 A.M. Came Lipman Gins, collector [Pol. "Kollektor"], 51, living here in Kalisz, in the presence of witnesses, the Jews [Pol. "Starozakonny"] Israel Dinte, broker/agent [Pol. "faktor"], 54, and Jakub Rup [likely Jakob Rupp], tailor [Pol. "krawiec"], 48, both living here in Kalisz, and he showed to us a male baby born here in Kalisz on August 30 of the current year at 10 A.M. from his wife Fryderika Gins, 34, to whom was given the name Moritz Gins. This Act was read to those present and to the witnesses, and it was signed by the father together with the witnesses. ...

[Signatures:] Lipman Gins

Israel Dinte

[Signature:] Jakub Rup

[Signature:] Dembinski

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Letters from Siberia: Translations by Boris Dralyuk, C.Phil.

As many of you know, Nikolaj Konstantin Gins was separated from his new wife, Julia, soon after they married in Omsk in 1919. He was a former Imperial Russian military officer and ended up in Krasnoyarsk in Siberia during the Civil War, as Julia made her way with George, Emilia, Seva and Sergei to Harbin, Manchuria. Nikolaj was unable to obtain permission from the authorities to leave Krasnoyarsk to rejoin his family for a couple of years, but he was able to correspond with Julia through mutual relations (Gerhart) in Harbin.

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My dear, beloved Julechka!

One after the other, I received the letters you'd sent on the 8th and 13th of June, and thanks to this I am endlessly happy!.. But I'd be happier yet if you were to receive the letter I had occasion to send along with a certain soldier appointed to the People's Revolutionary Committee army [*Rus.* "Narodnyj Revoljutsionnyj Komitet"; *acro.* "Narrevkom"]... How I envied him when he departed, while I was forced to stay and wait -- so that perhaps, if not today, then tomorrow, news would arrive from the Siberian Revolutionary Committee [*Rus.* "Sibirskij Revoljutsionnyj Komitet"; *acro.* "Sibrevkom"] granting me permission to return, finally, to where I'd left you, my indelible wife... How foolishly all this happened, how I curse myself for that ill-considered step...

And you know, my dear, that if they hadn't offered me the chance to ride with comfort in that train, then, undoubtedly, I wouldn't have left alone, and, hence, would have stayed with you. But now, for the sake of some of temp[orary] conveniences, I suffer a separation so long and torturous!..

And in addition to everything, as I've already written you, all those resources I had gathered for the betterment, supposedly, of our life -- all have vanished into thin air [*lit.* "sunk into the water"] because they've been annulled, and all hopes for the possibility of embarking upon a round-the-world journey in order to return to my native hearth and home [*lit.* "return to my native Penates"] in Romania have just as quickly collapsed, and so I've remained no better off than before [*lit.* "remained at the broken trough"]. You ask whether I've really managed to save my undergarments all this time?..

You know, if I hadn't managed to keep them, I'd be in a very tight spot. I've already written in several letters about how worn out we all are, and about the textile crisis we're enduring, which spreads like an epidemic to provisions as well.

It's a good thing that, as a professional worker, I've had the opportunity to receive in this time enough textiles for a soldier's blouse and pants. And on top of this, I'm in good standing with the Administration, thanks to which I've even been awarded a bonus of material supplies.

Starting July 1, the Administration has assigned me for permanent work as the Supplies Department Manager [*Rus.* "Zavedujushchij Otdelom Material'nogo Snabzhenija"], as well as to the Department of Labor Protection [*Rus.* "Okhrana Truda"] of the Enisej District's [*Rus.* "Gubernskij Otdel"; *acro.* "Gubotdel"] All-Russian Professional Union [*Rus.* "Vserossijskij Professional'nyj Sojuz"; *acro.* "Vseprofsojuz"] of Soviet Workers' [*Rus.* "Sovetskij rabotnik"; *acro.* "Sovrabotnik"].

This position is a good one, the salary being 5,100 rubles instead of the 2,975 which I'd received from the District's Executive Committee [*Rus.* "Gubernskij Ispolnitel'nyj Komitet"; *acro.* "Gubispolkom"].

Yes, speaking truthfully, this salary -- is an unlivable minimum, and it can hardly afford one a quarter liter of milk (6,000-7,000).

On the whole, if we didn't find our own ways out of this situation, it's undoubtable that this salary would simply not suffice. The price of a box of matches serves to illustrate this: 1,500 - 2,000 rubles.

Now we have markets where, for the time being, one can buy anything one likes or trade it for things.

However, in order to buy things, one must have a colossal amount of money: a pound [*Rus.* "funt"] of meat costs 3,000 rubles; a pood of wheat flower is 80,000 rubles; a pound [*Rus.* "funt"] of sugar is 10,000 rubles; and so forth -- all numbers with no fewer than three zeros.

It's a good thing we servicemen enjoy free meals at the mess-halls and receive 8 p[ounds] [*Rus.* "funt"] of rye flower a month, or we'd be in a particularly tight spot with meals. It's true: all this provides a mere 800 calories, when an organism requires 4 times that amount -- but by today's standards, even this is good. My hosts feed me a little on the side, for which I'm very grateful -- and I promise them all the time that when I'm allowed to return to the East, I'll send them presents.

Warmly, warmly I kiss you and hug you, my dear, and ask of you but one thing -- that you ignore the foolish dreams, which come [*unclear*]. Give my regards to all our relatives and friends. Your tenderly loving husband.

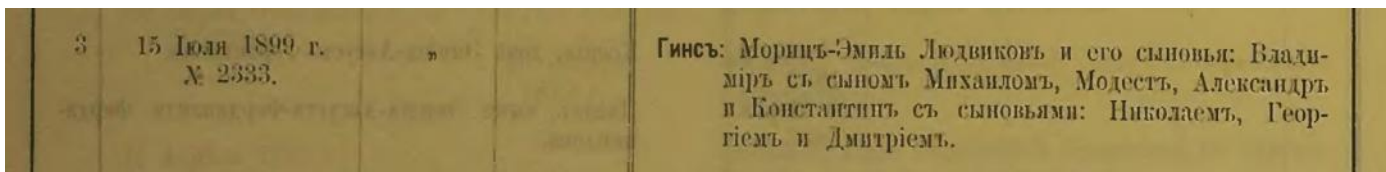
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Here is Boris' interpretation of Nikolaj's letter to Julia:

After too long a delay, I'm happy to present a full translation of one of Nikolaj's wonderfully rich and suggestive letters. To my mind, it presents a perfect balance of pathos and humor, elan and despair. One can't help gasp at the stark contrast between Nikolaj's masterful high epistolary style -- so redolent of the pre-Revolutionary noble milieu --, and the harsh realities he is forced to report. The letter is a remarkable historical document, touching on the political and military structure of the far-flung and short-lived Far Eastern Republic, as well as that of the Harbin emigre community. It is also a deeply affecting personal snapshot of the horrible economic crisis wrought by the Civil War. The figures Nikolaj jots down at the market to illustrate the period's massive inflation are quite literally priceless -- as is Nikolaj's serio-comic note about his "miraculously preserved" undergarments. I hope you get some sense of Nikolaj's artful, playful Russian through my garbled English!

Kievan Nobility Register: Translation by Boris Dralyuk, c.Phil.

The discovery that is the highlight of this issues is the entry that Boris found in the List/Register of Noblemen of the Kiev Gubernija (1906). I'll let him explain in his own words:



After what seems like an interminable wait, I've finally managed to acquire a snippet of the List/Register of Noblemen of the Kiev Gubernija (1906) [Rus. "Spisok dvorjan Kievskoj gubernii"] relating to the Ginses. I'm attaching a .JPG file. The information given is as follows:

Morits-Emil' Ljudvikov Gins, along with his sons Vladimir (with his son Mikhail), Modest, Aleksandr, and Konstantin (with his sons Nikolaj, Georgij, and Dmitrij), was granted hereditary nobility on July 15, 1899.

It seems that Morits-Emil' -- who appears here with his proper patronymic, Ludvikov(ich) --, rose to the rank of Actual State Councillor [Rus. "Dejstvitel'nyj Statskij Sovetnik"], thereby attaining hereditary nobility for himself and his sons, a mere two years before his death in 1901. This detail throws poignant light on Morits-Emil's Herculean struggle: he was absolutely determined to furnish his family with a sense of social and financial security he could never have hoped for as a child in Poland. Little did he know that the social fabric he'd woven his clan into would soon be torn warp from woof.

Aside from the names of Morits-Emil's sons and grandsons, the Kievan registers also provides a vital clue: the document number of his Actual State Councillor patent is 2333. (end of note)

This find underscores my earlier supposition that Morits Emil was the one to achieve hereditary nobility and pass it along to his children and grandchildren, rather than each of them earning such elevated status on their own. Time was growing short for the Empire, and this seemed like the logical sequence of events. However, I erroneously assumed that Morits Emil had achieved the near impossible and arrived at the rank of State Councillor on or before 1856, when the rules made it more difficult to become a hereditary noble. But, I'm learning — once again — to examine my assumptions, because the above evidence shows that Morits Emil did achieve his goal, only many years later than I had predicted.

I hope you've enjoyed this latest edition of the newsletter. Please send me notes or call if you have any thoughts about areas you think we should cover in our search for Gins family history. Your feedback and suggestions are very important to us!

