

The Story of Gustave Lindeman and Henrietta Okes Lindeman

By June Koch Price

David Abraham Okes (Oaks)(18 June 1816-4 July 1883) and Miriam “Mary” Rothchild (Rothschild) (16 Jan 1817-18 July 1904) immigrated to the United States in 1834.

David and Mary married in 1838. All of their children were born in Ohio. The 1860 Census is dated June 1, 1860. At that time **Henrietta Okes (Gustave Lindeman’s future wife)** was 16 and employed as a milliner in Cincinnati Ohio, (as were several other young ladies in her neighborhood.) She is listed on the census as living with her father, David Okes, 44, a laborer born in Mainz in the German state of Bavaria. His wife, Mary, is 42 and also from Bavaria. Other children at home are Rosa, 5 and Joseph 2.

Hannah Lindeman Schwarz remembers that her grandfather, David Okes (who suffered from edema) died in an accidental fall from the second story window of their home on July 4th, 1881. He was 64 years old. Hannah was only five at the time but remembers that *“they brought my grandma to our home, and we had to be very quiet and stay in the kitchen or back yard.”*

Mae Lindeman’s daughter Edith reports that in her last years Mary Rothschild Okes was living with Henrietta and Gus Lindeman. She was *“a little wisp of a woman, always in black and with coal-black hair. The hair was what intrigued me. I didn’t know then that it was a sheitel.”* Edith concludes from this that she had also been raised an orthodox Jew. (A sheitel is a black wig which orthodox Jewish women wore at all times, Josephine explains.)

Josephine Schwarz adds that Henrietta’s young sister Rosa was very close to the Lindeman family and the two families often visited. Rosa married Henry Winsberg and they lived in Lacrosse Wisconsin, and perhaps for a while in the Chicago area. They had seven children: Carrie, Della, David Abraham, Helen, Bernard, Lillian, and Meriam (who died at birth.)

Her younger brother Joseph Okes married Edith Bielman. They had two children, Day Ira Okes and Sidney Robert Okes Sr. both of whom apparently lived in Minnesota in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

Other names appear in the stories passed down through the years, that hint they were related to Beethoven and that Mary Rothschild Okes was related to the Rothschild financiers by that name. No attempts to confirm these relationships exist.

Gustav Lindeman (6 Sept 1845-2 Dec 1927) and **Henrietta Okes** (6 May 1844-21 March 1925) are married May 10, 1868 by the prominent Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, the first Reformed Jewish rabbi in the United States and are soon at home in Cincinnati Ohio. Henrietta, as a new and modern bride, no doubt bargains in the street with Charles Fleischman who is selling his amazing new invention, compressed yeast, from his basket to the housewives of Cincinnati. (these and other facts taken from: *The Peoples Chronicles*, Trager)

No doubt Gustav compliments his new wife on her homemade bread and being a cook he probably gives it a try himself. But chances are he is also interested in the first professional baseball club in the United States, the Cincinnati Red Stockings. They draw lots of attention in their new team invention –“uniforms.”

Perhaps he also debates with his friends on the porch in the cool of an evening as to whether Andrew

Johnson or Ulysses S. Grant should be president of the reconciled United States. In her leisure Henrietta no doubt scans the latest issue of *Revolution* as Susan B. Anthony campaigns across the country for women's right to vote. "*Men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less.*" But revolution is not in Henrietta's future, for within a few years she is busy tending to her first of nine children.

Milton Gustave was born May 29, 1873. Jewish families traditionally name the oldest grandson for his paternal grandfather, the oldest granddaughter for her paternal grandmother. Succeeding children are named for the maternal grandparents, then for uncles and aunts. No son was ever named Morris so it is possible that Henrietta lost a child in the five years prior to the birth of Milton. Benjamin followed 16 months later on September 19, 1874.

On April 5, 1876 Hannah (named for Morris' mother who was a 'noble woman') was born. Benjamin was less than two years old, Milton almost three.

Hannah has beautifully chronicled those Victorian years in her unpublished manuscript "Remembrances."

"I was born in Cincinnati on Richmond Street just a short distance from where my mother was born... It interested me very much to pass the house where Mother was born and then walk about five blocks and look at the two-story red brick house, that fairly squatted on the red brick pavement where I was born."

She paints a vivid picture of that time in history with the following paragraphs of her life on Court Street in 1881 when she was five.

"Three times a week there was a 'street market' on Court Street. We all loved that ... for at noon when the farmers packed up to go home it was so exciting. Mother would turn on the big faucet in the side yard and sweep and scrub the walk and gutter and we could take off our shoes and stockings and help. Then the two oldest boys whitened the four stone steps and polished the brass rail and brass doorknob and 'bricked' the sidewalk. Then we had dinner and if it was vacation time we had to rest quietly during the heat of the day. Was it hot? - brick house...brickyard ...brick sidewalk...no trees and cobbled street."

By 1881 Henrietta's brood had grown even larger. Sydney Okes was born October 13, 1877; Seeley Caro on July 27, 1879 and there was a new baby in the bassinet-Harry, born February, 1881.

Hannah remembers that *"In the evening a young boy came down the street carrying a small light ladder and a lighted wick on a long stick. The wick was very thin and covered with wax...The boy...had many lamps to light and looked very poor. Very early in the morning, just before dawn, he came around to turn the gas lamps off. In the winter Mother often gave the lamplighter a cup of hot coffee when he came to light the lamp."*

Another man was trying to light lamps too. Thomas Edison was working in his lab promising "to make electricity so cheap that only the rich will be able to afford candles."

"Every day at noon an organ grinder and his monkey entertained the children. In exchange for pennies the monkey would dance, squeak, and tip it's hat."

"The milkman came every day with horse and wagon... The driver stood on a step at the back of the wagon. We only got two quarts a day at six cents a quart, just enough for coffee. With a big ladle the milkman dished out the milk into your pitcher. We always had to pick a few flies out of the milk and we weren't supposed to use the milk until it was boiled."

"The waffle man often came right after the milkman. You could buy a waffle with sugar for a penny. He cooked them while you waited."

"We often had a hard time deciding what to do with our penny a week: See the monkey dance, buy a waffle or a pretzel or a big fat pickle." Hannah and Sidney had an agreement that if one bought the pickle or waffle and divided it, the other paid to watch the monkey dance.

Hannah recalls when she was six *“Daddy came home on my birthday with a big box tied with a big white satin ribbon. I remember how I trembled when I opened it and my heart jumped when I saw that beautiful big doll. It had a wax face so pink and white, blue eyes that really opened and closed, and gold curls... One day I went upstairs to get Mary, Sydney was sitting on the floor... And had pulled the wig off to see how the eyes worked and the eyes dropped out. He fooled with it so long the nose got bent and one cheek pushed in. Mother tried to console me, promising me a bisque doll and real hair. All I remember is saying to Mother, ‘No, I don’t want any, you don’t understand,’ and Mother saying, ‘You poor darling’”*.

After Henrietta’s father, David Okes, died in 1881 from the accidental fall, Henrietta’s mother, Mary Okes, came to live with the family. She arrived in time to help with the new baby, Louis, born on Oct 23, 1882. The expanding family had moved to a larger house further down Court Street near Baymiller. It was a “two-story brick with a real yard with grass and a fig tree.”

Gustav was having a tough time supporting his large family and decided to try his luck in Chicago. But Chicago didn’t agree with Hannah and she went with her uncle, Joe Okes to La Crosse, Wisconsin, where Henrietta’s sister Rose and her husband Henry Winsberg lived. Grandmother Mary Okes was visiting there too. Hannah spent the winter there and recalls that *“an Indian killed a white man. The night riders caught the Indian and lynched him. The Indians then set the whole downtown on fire. The fires burned for two nights and a day. Uncle’s store was in ashes.”*

“We all went to Cincinnati. Aunt Rose, her two children, Grandma, and me. Uncle Joe stayed in LaCrosse to help [Uncle Henry] clean up the mess”

In 1884 Gustav was put out of business once again. This time by one of the frequent spring floods on the Ohio River.

Gustav and Henrietta’s seventh son David was born Feb 19, 1887. He was named for his grandfather Okes. He had blue eyes and blond hair just like Grandpa. Hannah remembers the night he was born.

“When I was a child I believed a shooting star was a baby coming straight from heaven to its mother. The night David was born three of us were sitting in the front yard with our maid watching for shooting stars. I remember saying, ‘There are so many stars coming down tonight but none come near us.’”

“In the morning when Daddy told me we had a new little brother, I was sure he was mistaken. So he took me into Mother’s room and proved to me. He said I must have missed seeing this one for he knew David came straight from heaven. Daddy said, ‘When you look up into the sky you do not see the whole of heaven, you only see the part you are looking at’ and I was satisfied David came from heaven and for some reason God wanted him back. He was very sick and died when only three months old.”

Baby son, David Lindeman, was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio and shortly thereafter the family sadly moved to Rochester, New York.

Gustav was in the middle of moving the family when the baby died. He had accepted an offer to cater for a club there. He was doing well in spite of supporting such a large family. (Hannah remembers that he also paid expenses for his parents and sisters who remained in Cincinnati.) While in Rochester Henrietta bore her last child. A girl they named Claudia was born August 12, 1888.

“When Dad told me ‘we have a new baby, Hannah, guess what it is,’ I answered, ‘a boy, of course.’ When he told me I had a sister I didn’t believe him but when Mother said, ‘Yes, this time it is a little sister.’ What did I do? I cried for joy.”

After four years in Rochester the club closed and Gustav moved his family back to Cincinnati in 1891. His mother Yetta, Morris’ wife, had been sick for years and passed away that year. Gustav’s sisters had married and the lonely Morris was no doubt welcomed into the household of his generous son.

Gustav went to work at the St. Nicholas Hotel and the family lived in an eight-room, three-story house on Mound Street near Clark.

Jobs were scarce, rents were high, food was expensive and times were hard. Gustav was without a job again when the St. Nicholas Hotel burned and closed.

Hannah, then 13 years old, had to quit school to help her mother and grandmother run the household. Milton and Ben left school as well to help support the family. Gustav was making \$15 a week in a dry goods store, and Milton \$8 as an accountant for the Alms and Doepke Co. department store. They worked from 7 am to 6 pm. Gustav did the marketing on his way home from work each evening.

Hannah, Henrietta and Grandma (Mary Okes) kept house, cooked, and sewed all of the family garments. Not only outer garments but underwear was handmade for the entire family. After the sons began working they produced 24 new white shirts a year. At times Henrietta also assisted her husband's sisters with their clothing. Henrietta's teen-age employment at the milliners shop must have given her many skills she found useful as the family seamstress.

Hannah recalled that *"It was the first house we lived in that had a real bathroom with running water in the bathtub and all you had to do was pull a plug and the water ran out. The other houses had tubs, but you filled them by carrying water and in one place the tub was on high legs and had a hose attached to drain the water out. We kids made such a mess of it, Mother bathed us in a wooden wash tub by the kitchen stove."*

Hannah was up at five each morning to get breakfast for the boys and start the fires. Sydney suffered a six-week bout with typhoid fever and Henrietta spent most of her time at his bedside. Two weeks after Sydney recovered, Harry contracted the disease. It was a bitterly cold winter and fires had to be kept burning throughout the big house to keep it warm. It was an all-day job, tending the coal grates in every room and carrying out the ashes. Fuel was expensive and after such a severe winter and so much illness the family decided to rent out the living room for a while to make ends meet.

The lady who rented the room for \$6.00 a month was a student at the medical college in Cincinnati. Hannah was very interested in her work and enjoyed talking with her from time to time. Hannah planned to become a nurse someday.

In 1895 Gustav accepted an offer to cater for the Dayton Club and the Buzfuz Club in Dayton. The family moved to a nine-room house on Hydraulic Street complete with large yard and a barn. By this time most of the boys were working at good jobs and life was prosperous again. (The BuzFuz Club is a very exclusive gentlemen's club that still exists in Dayton. Gus Schwarz has a pewter tankard on his mantel that is inscribed with that name.)

Then came another disastrous flood. The boys were at work so Gustav and Hannah began untacking and rolling up carpets as fast as they could, while water bubbled up through the heating registers.

"We got only two [rugs] up on the couch after putting the couch on three chairs. Our hands were bleeding. We had sent Mother, Grandma and Claudia upstairs."

"Mother called down. Please try to save my books. Let everything else go. Do come up here."

"Well we were soon knee-deep in water, dirty muddy water and cold Dad made me go part way upstairs and he handed

books to me. Then I gave them to Mother: Longfellow, Shakespeare, Byron, etc. As Dad was handing me the two big Bibles we heard a crash-the bookcase and all the small sets of books were face down in the water. The water was up to the piano keys. Dad waded to the kitchen thinking he might get some food. It was raining and sleeting-of course no furnace fire, no food, so we sat at the front room window upstairs and watched things float by.

“By four in the afternoon the water found its level as boats and rafts came to take people from their homes. We all climbed out of the stair landing window onto a raft. The women went to stay with the family of a cook who worked for Gustav. The boys and Gustav stayed at the Dayton Club sleeping on chairs and couches.

“Three days after the flood the fire department pumped water out of all the cellars and turned the hose on the houses inside and out as high as the mud or water line. Next day Harry and I built a furnace fire. The house steamed from attic to cellar in spite of all windows open. The wood and coal were so wet we had to use coal oil to get it going. It worried me. ‘Harry said, ‘Don’t worry, the house won’t bum, it will just fix.’”

“It took ten days of hard work to get the house clean enough that the family could return. Six months later the walls and floors were redone, and Gustav paid \$100 to have the piano repaired.”

Hannah was given a small diary for Christmas that year, and page by page she dutifully chronicled her life day by day from January until September 1897. In September of 1898 she added a report on her trip with Gustav to New York, Washington, and Philadelphia.

The life of this lovely young lady of 21 seems typical of the life and times of well-bred, middle-class Victorian girls. Her days are filled with helping her mother run the household and calling on the neighbors. She finds particular joy in caring for her young sister and sewing clothes for herself and Claudia. She is more interested in music, theater, books, and the synagogue than she is in her suitors. My favorite passage in her diary was when she wrote of one, *“I wouldn’t let him say soft things into my ear.”*

She enjoyed a large group of friends, which included her future husband, Joseph Schwarz. These friends and some of their neighbors often gathered for an evening of music dance and conversation. All of the Lindemans were musical. She recalls hearing her father “whistling low, soft, operatic airs” and praises the musical talents of her brothers. They had the largest barn in the neighborhood so all the dances were at their place. Her mother never complained; *“she looked tired and careworn at times but was most patient with us and very understanding.”*

Seeley C. Lindeman wrote of his youth in a letter to his great grandson, Andy Dhonau, in 1976 when he was 97 years old, and in an earlier playful sketch to his daughter, Etta Koch (prior to 1967) entitled “This is My Life?” (see elsewhere on this site).

Other members of Gustav’s family wrote briefly of their remembrances of childhood. Edith Calisch has preserved the memories of her mother Mae Elliott soon after she married Sydney in 1896.

Edith Calisch writes that Gustav and Henrietta were non-observant and *“never kept a kosher household, never celebrated any of the Jewish holidays and seldom, if ever, went to Synagogue. Sidney and Hannah were the only two children to carry on the Jewish religion of their grandparents in the raising of their future families.”*

In spite of his setbacks, Edith Calisch writes that Gustav was known as *“the best caterer in Cincinnati.”* He was employed by a committee from the fledgling Hebrew Union College to prepare the banquet whereby Rabbi Isaac M. Wise and members of the Reform College would bring together rabbis from the surrounding areas and attempt to sway them to the Reform movement. It turned into a disaster in 1883, when Gustav prepared three non-kosher delicacies that were an affront to the eight traditional Jewish leaders, who walked out in protest over the non-- Kosher food. However, Gustav returned to prepare the banquet again the following year. (There are several paragraphs regarding this story in a book called *The Jews in America*, pages 138-139 in which Gustav is named only as “a Jewish caterer.”)

Eventually the Lindemans settled into a comfortable life (above the flood water line) in Dayton, where they enjoyed their 18 grandchildren who lived close enough to be frequent visitors. Gustav was influential in organizing the Dayton Stewards' Club and was active in the International Stewards' Association and in all of its affairs. He is remembered as a kind and gentle man and certainly as a generous person. His cookbook now belongs to his granddaughter Susanne's son, Carl Lang.

Etta Koch remembers her grandmother Lindeman as a rather frail person-- compared to Grandma Batchelor who was quite robust and vivacious. . . Henrietta was *"Tiny, pale, with a rather soft voice... and querulous more often than not. She was pretty, too, in a delicate way. It is hard to believe, looking back, that this apparently frail little woman had produced nine children, eight of whom lived to mature ages. . . Six boys and two girls."*

Henrietta and Gustav lived at 52 Holt Street. Then moved across the street to 49 Holt Street. On March 21, 1925, while living at 49 Holt Street, Henrietta died, at 80, after suffering many months with breast cancer. She was buried at Riverview Cemetery in Dayton on March 23, 1925.

June 1, 1905 is the date of a poem in Hannah's diary. Perhaps she composed it to honor Henrietta Lindeman on some occasion-perhaps a belated birthday gathering.

Here's to the health of Grandma Dear
Here's to her joys and here's to good cheer
Here's to the love she bears to one and all
With a happy response to every call.
Like the petals of this rose to its fond heart clings
Like the perfume it sends forth and beauty it brings.
Such is the love of our Grandma here
With her dear ones around her from far and near.
Three cheers, three cheers for Grandma dear
And many more cheers for many a year
That her days may be peaceful her nights full of rest
Is the song we'll all sing to the one we love best.

In 1927 Gustav was visiting his son Sidney who was living in Greensboro, North Carolina. Gustav died of a heart attack on December 2 at 82 years of age. Rabbi Milton Ellis officiated at services conducted in Greensboro. The family then returned to Dayton with his remains and burial services were held for him on December 5, 1927.

His obituary speaks of him as from *"the old school of chivalry: Gallant and Courteous."* It describes him in lavish terms of the day as *"Possessing the soul of a woman and the fine, virile qualities of a man of sterling honor...he was one of the nation's finest cooks. He was a master of the culinary art."*

Gustav's cookbook contains a lighthearted toast that has been handed down through the Schwarz family:

"Here's to the best in the worst of us.
And the worst in the best of us.
So it behooves each one of us
Not to talk about the rest of us!"

In 1993 I visited Gustav's only namesake, Gus Schwarz, at his home in Jackson, Wyoming. We met one Sunday morning for a champagne brunch at the beautiful Snow King Resort. My plate was loaded with specialties of the house, and I thought of our common ancestor, Gustav Lindeman.

“Gus, tell me about your grandfather. What are your childhood memories of him?”

“Not really anything,” Gus replied thoughtfully, “I was pretty young when he died. Well, one thing. I can recall him carefully showing me how to spread butter on my bread.”

My first reaction was sadness that Gus did not have a long story to tell, and then I thought again. How appropriate that this “culinary artist” took time to show his youngest grandson a basic fact--how to get a little butter on his bread!