

Lithuania conditions and history

### **Lithuania history of a small town called Sirvintos (Shirvint).**

*In the early 1800's, Jews settled in Sirvintos. They were able to rent land from estate owners, open inns, pubs, and shops between Vilkomir and Vilna. Sirvintos is approximately 30 miles northwest of Vilna.*

*By 1847 Sirvintos had 216 Jews. Fifty years later (1897), Jews numbered 1,413 and made up the majority of the population.*

*The Polish and Lithuanian borders were 2 miles from Sirvintos. It wasn't until 1923 that the borders were finally set between Poland and Lithuania.*

*"From the end of the nineteenth century and during the period of independent Lithuania, Shirvint was a county administrative center."*

*"In an 1869-1878 list of immigrants to the United States eight Shirvint Jews are mentioned; E. Segal, J. B. Openheim, E. Palemboim, B. and M. Kabaker, S. Orzhalkovsky, T. Bibtelsky, M. Manheim."*

Protecting Our Litvak Heritage by Josef Rosin, 2009, published by the Friends of the Yurburg Jewish Cemetery, page 166, 168.

*There are many families in the blue book that came from Sirvintos. The Garons, who are mentioned in the news articles, Coran, and Berkowitz.*

*"During the six years of turmoil in the town, Mrs. Garon and her husband witnessed governmental rule by Russians, Germans, Poles, Bolshevik and Lithuanians. The Poles dominated the region twice in this period."*

### **SHTETL SEEKER**

#### History

White Russia, Belorussiya, Litva SSR

Jews have been in Lithuania since the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

The Jewish population in the 1800's was 250,000.

For 600 years Lithuania has been under another countries rule.

In 1385 it was united with Poland.

In 1796 Russia

In 1918 it was independent.

In 1940 it was over run by the Nazis.

In 1944 it was annexed by the Soviet Union.

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### Town of Sirvintos

Sirvintos is in the eastern part of Lithuania and southeast of Ukmerge (Vilkomir). It is known as Shirvint in Yiddish.

## Duluth Jeweler, Home From Trip Abroad, Describes Trade Status

### Lithuanian Conditions Indescribable, Julius Garon Says.



JULIUS GARON.

Business and labor conditions in Germany are at a high peak as compared to the conditions in England and France, according to Julius Garon, Duluth jeweler, who has just returned from a three months' trip to European countries. Mr. Garon visited cities in France, Switzerland, Germany, England and Lithuania. Conditions in Lithuania are indescribable, Mr. Garon said.

American business men who order goods from German manufacturers cannot depend upon obtaining the goods at the price ordered, he stated. The goods are often subject to advance in prices of 100 per cent. Mr. Garon placed a small order for goods in Germany and when the goods arrived in New York he was notified of an increase of more than 100 per cent over the original price. This is due, Mr. Garon explained, because of the large amount of orders placed with German manufacturers.

#### Housing Conditions Poor.

While housing conditions in Germany are poor, Mr. Garon said, the government regulates the rent allowing only 50 to 60 per cent increase over prewar rents.

"Americans in Germany are welcomed while the French people seem to be after the American's money only," Mr. Garon declared. "Americans residing in Germany are able to live comfortably for less than half the cost of living in the United States."

Strikes and lockouts have seriously affected the labor condition in Sheffield, England. Purchasing is at a low ebb and prices of foodstuffs are high in the territory which contains the largest mills in the country, Mr. Garon declared. Prices throughout the European countries visited by Mr. Garon are on the same average as those in America with the exception of Germany, Mr. Garon added.

The French populace in general has no respect for the American visitors, Mr. Garon continued. The French have a "want to get even attitude." Several persons declared to Mr. Garon that America entered the war to gain financially.

#### Passport Destroyed.

Drunkenness and bribery prevail in Lithuania, Mr. Garon declared he was forced to wait five days before he was able to procure a passport to Sirvintal, a village between Lithuania and Poland, where his parents lived. Mr. Garon's father died five days before Mr. Garon reached his destination. Citizens who wish to do right are at a disadvantage in Lithuania. Three days before leaving Sirvintal for Lithuania a drunken military officer destroyed Mr. Garon's passport.

After Mr. Garon obtained a duplicate passport the military officer refused to countersign it. He was forced to pay 1,500 marks to obtain the signature. Not content with having forced him to pay for the signa-

ture, the officer detailed a soldier to accompany Mr. Garon and his mother to the boundary line, Mr. Garon said. Mr. Garon's mother, who is 70 years old, arrived here with him.

#### Whisky as Bribe.

A bribe of a bottle of whisky enabled Mr. Garon to reach the post-office which was located past the boundary line of Lithuania. The soldier on guard refused to allow Mr. Garon to re-enter the country without the payment of more whisky, but Mr. Garon threatened to inform the American consul of the affair. While traveling a distance of 50 miles in Lithuania the party was stopped six times and asked for their passports.

The party found no difficulty in gaining entrance to the United States but Mr. Garon was forced to spend three days to obtain a certified copy of his mother's birth record.

Merchants in Lithuania are given food once each month to distribute to their customers. The merchants are required to fill an order blank, Mr. Garon explained, but if any discrepancies are discovered the food is confiscated by the military authorities. The confiscated food is not given to the populace but is used by the military authorities, he added.

Duluth News-Tribune, May 14, 1922

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## Duluth Arrival Narrates Tale of Outwitting Cossack Raiders

### Aged Woman Experiences First Thrill of Movie, Train, Phone.

Witnessing six changes of national government rule within six years, Mrs. Pese Garon, just arrived in Duluth from Sirvintal, Lithuania, yesterday told of an incident in 1916, when, despite her advanced age, she bravely outwitted two Cossack soldiers, who sought to rob her of her possessions.

Mrs. Garon is 71 years old, the mother of eight children, grandmother of 22, and great grandmother of one. Most of her kin are in the United States. She is making her home with her eldest son and Mrs. Julius Garon, 1511 Jefferson street, Made of Iron.

"That I am alive today, I must be made of iron," was her naive explanation, concluding her experiences in the little town of Sirvintal.

On the occasion of the Cossack raid in 1916, she said, two Russian soldiers entered the little store conducted by her husband, demanding money. They were given a sum, which they considered inadequate. Mr. Garon promised to obtain more and departed.

Tiring of waiting, the two invaders left. Two comrades then entered, demanding tobacco. Informed by the woman that there was none on the premises, they shouted out their insistence and insisted on being furnished with "tsikerkes" (candies).

**Hands to Harrel.**  
Mrs. Garon directed them to a barrel under a counter which contained a large quantity of sticky preserves. Both Cossacks, believing they had come upon a hoard of the much cherished sweets, plunged their hands in deeply. The sticky mass held them fast despite their struggles and cursing.

The woman quickly extinguished a small lamp, which furnished the quarters with light, left them in the darkness, and fled to friendly neighbors for safety. Directly the advance of the Germans through the territory was taking place. By the time the aged couple returned, the Germans were in possession of the village, having driven the Cossacks out.

**Six Years of Turmoil.**  
During the six years of turmoil in the town, Mrs. Garon and her husband witnessed governmental rule by Russians, Germans, Poles, Bolsheviks and Lithuanians. The Poles dominated the region twice, in this period she said. Mrs. Garon's husband died shortly before the arrival in Europe, last March 7 of his son, Julius, who had made the trip for the purpose of returning to Duluth with his aged parents.

On another occasion, Mrs. Garon recalled, a Bolshevik trooper pointed a gun at her head, threatening to shoot her for no apparent reason. "I do not know to this day, how I ever escaped," she said.

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eral weeks she experienced a number of new thrills in life, among which were her first train and automobile rides, viewing her first photograph, speaking over the phone for the first time and turning on an electric light.

"I am certain I shall like America," she said. "I know I love Duluth already."

Duluth News-Tribune, May 21, 1922

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The Garon siblings  
Duluth, Minnesota  
Photo taken between 1903-1905

Left to right by couples:

Dora Kaplan and Julius Garon; Michel Mary Garon and Hershel Samuels; Israel Garon;  
Pesha Anna Hanna Simon and Morris Moses Garon; Rose Yessi and Joseph Garon; Nelly  
Myers and Abraham Garon

**Duluth News-Tribune, March 8, 1922**  
**Father of Duluth Man Dies in Luthuanian Home**

While his son Julius Garon, Duluth jeweler was en route to bring him to Duluth, Zimmel garon, age 72, dies at his home in Sirvintal, Lithuania according to a cablegram received by Mrs. Garon here yesterday.

Mr. Garon, owener of the Duluth Jeweler' Supply company, left Duluth a few weeks ago on a business trip to Europe, particularly Switzerland, with the intention of bringing his father and mother to Duluth. Thursday Mr. Garon was in Switzerland, from where he sent a cablegram to his home here. It is the belief of relatives that he had not reached the bedside of his father before his father's death.

Mr. Garon's mother probably will return with her son, who is expected here within a month.

**Duluth News-Tribune, March 12, 1933**  
**Obituary notice:**

**Mrs. P. Garon.**

Submitted by Karen Alpert Entous

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February 14, 2009

Revised March 19, 2009



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Mrs. P. Garon, 420 Seventh avenue east, died yesterday on her way to synagogue services. She was 82 years old. Death was apparently due to heart disease. She came to Duluth from Poland about 10 years ago. She is survived by sons, Abe, Julius, Morris and D. Garon of Duluth and Joseph Garon of Virginia. And three daughters, Mrs. H. Samuels, Duluth; Mrs. J. Mekler of Grand Forks, N. D., and Mrs. S. Heifetz, Poland. She resided at 420 Seventh avenue east. Funeral services will be held at 2:30 p.m. today in the home of her daughter Mrs. Samuels.

### **Nine children:**

Shevel Gran or Garon 1870-1872

Friadel Garon 1875-? and Samuel Elyaho Heifetz

Morris (Moses) Garon 1879-1969 and Pesa Anna Hanna Simon 1877-1965

Julius Garon 1875-1966 and Dora Kaplan 1875-1949

Abraham Garon 1881-1951 and Nelly Myers 1892-1970

Israel Garon 1882-1972 and Hannah Mary Kaner 1883-1962

Joseph Garon 1883-1975 and Rose Yessi 1885-1976

Michel Mary Garon 1890-1973 and Hershel Samuels d: 1946

Brina (Bertha) Garon 1895-1962 and Rabbi Jachiel Mekloer 1894-1981