



Adapted by the author, with the help of Barbara Borzuchowska Andersen, Ph.D., from http://www.pszczew.mszerwer.pl/cms_foto/20090427120446_plan_miasta.jpg

Stop Thief!
The True Story of Abraham Greenthal,
King of the Pickpockets in 19th Century New York City,
as Revealed from Contemporary Sources
by Edward David Luft

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Introduction

The story of Abraham Greenthal is a cracking good adventure and all true. I am amazed that no one has written a biography of The General before. His story deserves to be published, and I have brought the man to life. Many readers are likely to be fascinated with this slice of 19th century New York City life and a criminal's exploits along with their consequences.

Abraham Greenthal was the greatest pickpocket of the 19th century in the United States and perhaps in the world at that time. His exploits were eagerly followed by many newspapers, not only in New York City but also elsewhere in order to satisfy public interest in his adventures and trials. The extensive footnotes in this work amply demonstrates how closely the newspapers followed his exploits. He was a kind of Mafia don before there was a Mafia in the United States. He demanded respect and could not understand how anyone could disrespect him with impunity even while he was in prison. This study examines his parents from the earliest data available about them through Abraham's burial. The newspaper record ends almost immediately after his death in 1889. Thus, the study ends shortly after his burial.

As perusal of the Bibliography will show, criminal undertakings in Posen among Jews had a long history. Many Jews and non-Jews operated in gangs. However, the distinguishing factor was that Jews were seen as a group apart, prone to crime. The Jews did not neatly fit into what rulers saw as a Christian state and were often, not only despised but also discriminated against as a group. They labored under many disabilities and thus, to earn a living, felt that in some cases, they had to resort to crime. The man discussed in this work and his family fit that model, coming from a criminal family; he brought up his daughters, or at least some of them, to also engage in crime as a profession. While the discriminatory burdens in Europe placed upon Jews in a few cases caused them to look to crime, most Jews simply wanted to get on in life and were not engaged in what we would regard today as criminal pursuits. The additional stigmas placed upon Jews by the rise of anti-Semitism did not help in life and so, rejected by many of their Christian neighbors, some Jews, following a tradition in Europe, felt that if they were to be treated as rejected, would also reject the values of the society in which they lived, the outsiders, from their viewpoint. Nevertheless, they were part of the Jewish community and so viewed themselves as part of that in-group. That insularity did nothing to promote good relations with their Christian neighbors, of course. Just as Jews associated together to bond as a community, there was a sub-community of Jewish criminal gangs, often not respected by the larger Jewish community, which was, however, loathe to expose them to Christian justice for fear of unleashing a greater tide of anti-Semitism upon the whole Jewish community.

Frequently, criminal families, at least among the Jews, sought to marry among themselves. Such was Abraham's case, where he married a woman from one of the finest criminal families in Breslau, now Wrocław, Poland.

Abraham was very inventive in his early career, first out of necessity, and later out of a desire to increase his income. It was he who invented pickpocketing on trains when trains were a new form

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of passenger transportation in Prussia. Earlier would-be criminals could not manage to find a way to pick pockets while navigating the narrow aisles on trains. Abraham worked with his brother and later also with his father to crowd the victim and detain the latter while picking his pocket. He also mastered the technique of dropping cigar boxes in front of the victim to make movement difficult when boarding or descending from a train.

When writing about a place, I have used the name given to that place by the administering power. Thus, I have used German names for a place during the period when the area was under Prussian administration and Polish names when that same location was under Polish rule.

I wish to thank many people for help in researching the manuscript, including, but not limited, to Dr. Dariusz Rymar, Director, The State Archive in Gorzów Wielkopolski, Poland, and his staff; Dr. Andrzej Kirmiel, Director, The State Archive in Międzyrzecz, Poland, and his staff; The United States National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; Dr. Iêda Siqueira Wiarda and Francisco Rogido of the Hispanic Division, Library of Congress; Roberta Saltzman of the Dorot Jewish Division of the New York Public Library; Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Recife, Brazil; the Library of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Bette Epstein of the New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, NJ; The New York State Library and the New York State Archives. Albany, NY; Monica McMullin, Liverpool, UK; Bruce Abrams of the New York County Clerk's Office, New York City; Angelika Ellmann-Krüger of Berlin; The Greene County Room, Greene County Public Library, and Joan Donovan and Catherine Wilson, all of Xenia, OH; The New City Public Library, Jersey City, NJ; Rina Banerjee, Mercer County Library, Lawrenceville, NJ; Mary Lovell of Seymour Public Library District, Auburn, NY; M'Lissa Y. Kesterman of the Cincinnati History Library and Archives, Cincinnati, OH; Jackson District Library, Jackson, MI; Marco Fiaccadori, Ph.D.; Barbara Borzuchowska Andersen, Ph.D., of Washington, DC; Lucia Wolf of the Library of Congress, Deputy Director Dr. Uwe Spiekermann of the German Historical Institute and J. Douglas Leith of Newton, MA.

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Chapter 1
Before Coming to America (1788-1850)

In a “tell all” newspaper interview with a senior reporter of one of the most influential newspapers of the era in New York City, Abraham related his career until the date of the interview. He either had a prodigious memory or kept of diary, which he would have had in jail at the time of the interview. As we shall see, the interview was the cause of much trouble for Abraham and for his family, and we must wonder why Abraham gave it in the first place. Abraham stated incorrectly in the interview that he was born in Prussia in 1827. The article indicates that he was a Jew of Polish parents.¹ He was of medium height, with small black eyes, and jet black hair and beard. In 1871 he weighed nearly 200 pounds and had a peculiar, gambling gait.²

Although no record has been found in which Abraham Greenthal stated his exact birthdate,³ the register of the Jewish Community of Betsche,⁴ Kreis Meseritz, vital records,⁵ shows that Isaak Hirsch, master tailor, became the father of a legitimate male child, Abraham Isaak, on 9 January 1822,⁶ which is Wednesday, 16 Tevet 5582. Abraham was the second child and first male child. His parents had been married after the first child was conceived but before she was born. Itzig Hirsch

¹ “A Most Influential Thief: What It Has Cost a Scoundrel to Keep Out of Prison,” Saturday, 7 October 1871, *The Sun*, New York, p. 3, cols. 1-2. Much of what is known about Abraham’s early life comes from this interview. The statement that he was of Polish parents probably says more about the prejudices of the reporter and his readership than the truth about Abraham.

² *Ibid.*

³ Abraham did not state his correct age in the ship manifest when he left Recife, Brazil, for New York City, listing himself as age 47 in 1865. He would have given that age personally to the captain or purser.

⁴ See Kaplan, Marion A., ed., *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618-1945*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, including (notes in German, pp. 473-574) bibliographical references, pp. 477-505; German bibliography, pp. 580-611; and index of persons, pp. 613-619, index of places, pp. 628-624, and subject index, pp. 625-638. Betsche discussed at pp. 46, 217, and 561. See also p. 166 and p. 415, n. 46. See also “Strauss, I., “Happy childhood,” pp. 36, 39, and other locations.

⁵ Register of Jewish births, marriages, and deaths, 1817-1847, for Betsche, Posen, Germany; now Pszczew, Zielona Góra, Poland, held in the Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig, Germany, and on Family History Library [Mormon] microfilm 1335040, item 3, pp. 5-6. Isaak died between 1848 and 1856.

⁶ Per pp. 32-33, in Betsche, entry No. 4, of the register cited in note 5.

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of Inowrazlaw, tradesman, age 29, married Lea, née David, of Betsche, age 20, on 19 August 1817. His father was Hirsch Itzig of Inowrazlaw, by profession a renter of cattle from someone else, while her father was David Moses of Betsche, tradesman. The couple was married by Rabbi Michael Levi Golde of Meseritz.⁷ The first child, named Male, illegitimate female, was born in Betsche on 16 January 1818.⁸

Based upon the naming patterns used by Ashkenazic [German culture] Jews, who name only after recently deceased members of the family, Isaak, Abraham's father, died prior to 1855, when his grandson of that name was born, and his daughter Male died prior to 1851 when Abraham's daughter of that name was born.⁹

The modern map of Betsche, Posen, Prussia, now Pszczew, Poland,¹⁰ on the inside front cover shows the 19th century synagogue and the Jewish cemetery. Both are at the southern end of the town.

When Abraham was age eight years, his father was sentenced to 15 years in prison for robbery under circumstances created in a sensational trial, discussed later in this chapter. Abraham's younger brother was Harris, known as Herman. During the first six years of his career, Abraham was arrested about every 6 months and discharged after only a few days of confinement.¹¹

⁷ See Luft, Edward, *The Naturalized Jews of the Grand Duchy of Posen in 1834 and 1835, Revised Edition*, Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, Inc., 2004, 278 pp., at p. 30. Abraham was too young to have been naturalized while his father was ineligible because he was a convicted criminal and in prison.

⁸ See the register listed in n. 3, pp 10-11. Heymann, Isaak and Lea's youngest son, was born 22 March 1830 in Betsche, p. 78. The youngest daughter Ewa was born in Betsche on 6 August 1833, at 8 a. m., pp. 150-151. These were the only births recorded in Betsche for this family. There is no evidence of stillborn children or other, unrecorded births for this family. Exact death dates for Abraham's parents and for his sisters are unknown. The deaths of Abraham and Heymann (Herman) are discussed in Chapter 8. For more on Ewa, popularly called Hannah, see Chapter 9.

⁹ See Chapter 8, n. 5.

¹⁰ For a modern map of the village of Pszczew [Betsche, in German], see http://www.pszczew.pl/photo.php?http://www.pszczew.msarwer.pl/cms_foto/20090427120446_plan_miasta.jpg/. Grünthal was a Vorwerk of Betsche; thus the origin of the surname. See http://www.genealogienetz.de/reg/BRG/neumark/mct_abcd.htm/. A "Vorwerk is a farm or outpost of a larger settlement.—Translation by author.

¹¹ *The Sun, op. cit.*

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The next time that we see a trace of Abraham is in an arrest warrant issued by the Posen Government.¹² The arrest warrants for Abraham Leßlauer¹³ and Heinemann Grünthal show that they are related to each other. Abraham was apparently surnamed Leßlauer from the Prussian governmental point of view.¹⁴ The description in the warrant for Abraham Leßlauer reads. Status: young trader, birthplace and home: Betsche; religion: Jewish; age: 15 years; hair: dark brown; forehead fairly free of hair; eyebrows: blonde, eyes: gray; nose small, mouth slightly thick; teeth: good; beard: none; chin: oblong; face: oval, complexion: healthy; small stature, distinguishing marks: pockmarked and freckled.

His relative and partner in crime was Heinemann Grünthal. Status: Young trader, birthplace and home: Betsche; religion: Jewish; age: 18 years; height: 5 feet 1 inch; hair: black; forehead free of hair; eyebrows: blonde, eyes: dark brown, nose and mouth: normal; teeth: good, no beard, chin: oblong; face: oval, complexion: dark brown, thin stature, distinguishing marks: blind in his right eye.

Less than a year later, there was another arrest warrant for Abraham:¹⁵ Arrest warrant for Abraham Leßlauer: Abraham Leßlauer, who, as a result of a market theft executed in Tirschtiegel, was to be kept under observation because he was afflicted with scabies and not sent immediately, but had to be long kept under police surveillance until such time as he was cured. However, he found an opportunity to remove himself surreptitiously. We therefore urge all the civil and military authorities to be vigilant for the said Lesslauer and to arrest him on the spot and sent here by transport. Itemized

¹² *Amtsblatt der königlichen Regierung zu Posen*, "Oeffentlicher Anzeiger," No. 23, 6 June 1837, p. 455.

¹³ The name appears to originate from "Leslau," the name given by Germans to Włocławek, Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland. Before World War II, it had a sizable Jewish community. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W%C5%82oc%C5%82awek/>. Nevertheless, according to <http://www.yivo.org/uploads/files/topo.htm/> and other sources, Inowrocław, formerly known in German as Inowrazlaw or Jung-Breslau, and also called in German Hohensalza, was the town of origin of Abraham's father, and known in Yiddish as Lesle [taken from the German "Leslau"]. Włocławek in Polish was Leslau in German but both Old Leslau or Vlotslavek in Yiddish; for the Yiddish in Hebrew letters, see the YIVO website, listed above.

¹⁴ Abraham always used "Abraham" as first name but freely changed his surname. He might have seen his first name as something real because it was part of Jewish culture while his surname was a concoction of the secular government, for which he had little respect or even contempt.

¹⁵ *Amstblatt, op. cit.*, No. 21, 22 May 1838, p. 384. It is to be noted that he is not reported to know the Polish language, something that the Prussian authorities carefully noted in other cases.

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description: Surnames: Hirsch Isak, also Lesslauer; first name: Abraham, born and resides: Betsche; Religion: Jewish; age: 15 years; height: 5 foot 2 inches, hair: dark brown and curly, his forehead: high; eyebrows: black ; eyes: blue-gray, nose long, mouth, proportional; full set of adult teeth; chin: oval, facial structure: long, complexion: fair health; shape: medium, languages: German and Yiddish.

Betsche, 18 May 1838.

The city authorities.

Abraham's brother, Hermann, was also wanted by the authorities.¹⁶ Arrest warrant for Leslauer, Hermann, born and resides in Betsche, Jewish, age 16, 5'1", dark brown hair, forehead half covered and round, black eyebrows, glue eyes, nose and mouth unremarkable. No beard. Good and full teeth, round chin, oval face. Good health. Rather small build. No special marks.

Later in 1838, the authorities finally caught up with Abraham:¹⁷ Under the 17th of May of this year Abraham Posner and Abraham Lesslauer, both wanted Jews, were on 25 June of this year stopped in Prenzlau and will be transported here.

Betsche, 20 July 1838.

The city authorities.

Abraham's younger brother, Hermann, was more difficult to apprehend:¹⁸ The Jewish boy, Herrmann Lesslauer, under police supervision, has sometime ago secretly left here. All responsible authorities are respectfully requested to arrest the said Lesslauer, wherever found and surrender him to us. Description: Hermann Lesslauer, also surnamed Isaac, born and living in Betsche, age 18, 5'2".

Arrest warrant dispatches note:¹⁹ The public gazette in this year, no 8, page 123, states: Wanted Jewish boy, Hermann Lesslauer, who has now been presented here, for which reason the mentioned arrest warrant is fulfilled. Betsche, 24 February, 1839. The city authorities.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 7, 14 February 1837, p. 103.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 32, 7 August 1838, p. 573.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 8, 19 February 1839, p. 123.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 10, 5 March 1839, p. 169.

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The governmental authorities prosecuted Abraham, and he was convicted. We find him leaving Rawicz Prison²⁰ on 26 June 1844. He was then arrested in Jastrow, West Prussia, about 78 miles north of Betsche, for what today would be called having no visible means of support. His proposed route to Betsche was rejected, but he was sent home. However, an inquiry to the magistrate in Betsche resulted in the information that he never arrived there. The result was that the magistrate in Jastrow requested all persons seeing the 12 November 1844 notice in the *Amtsblatt* for Marienwerder to look out for Abraham and send him to Betsche.²¹

Isaak Hirsch Leslauer, the father of Abraham and Hermann, was also released from prison in 1844, according to the archival records in Gorzów while Hermann Leslauer, age 28, according to those same records, was released on 17 February 1847, although he was apparently arrested again shortly thereafter. What is clear is that the father and both sons were all in Rawicz Prison at the same time.

The authorities again caught up with Abraham's brother, Hermann, who did not finally leave prison until 13 August 1848.²² Apparently, Hermann served a year for another crime.

Upon Abraham's release, the prison authorities notified the authorities in Betsche, his hometown:²³

No 1

A. Those convicts released from Rawicz Prison in 1844

²⁰ Rawicz Prison is still in use today. For a discussion of the prison in Polish and photographs of the prison, see <http://hczarnecki.republika.pl/rawicz.htm/>. For a 1945 aerial view of the prison, see <http://collections.yadvashem.org/photosarchive/en-us/82792.html/>.

²¹ No. 47 of 1844, p. 369, entry XIV, <http://books.google.com/books?id=ScODAAAACAAJ&pg=PA366-IA4&dq=%22Abraham+Lesslauer%22&hl=en&sa=X&ei=bj-HUrvcE7Ld4APG04CgDQ&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22Abraham%20Lesslauer%22&f=false>

²² Archiwum Państwowe w Gorzowie Wielkopolskim, Akta miasta Pszczewa, Polizeiornungen, sygn. 324. In sygn. 399 release order for Abraham Leslauer, of Betsche, age 22 before 31 December 1844, released 8 March 1844. The release information appears for 1844 on p. 66, for 1845 on p. 72, for 1846 on p. 78, and for 1847 on p. 84. There are no further entries for him. It is not clear why the dates differ or why Abraham was released in so many different years. For Isaac Hirsch, see p. 68; for Hermann, see p. 90.

²³ *Ibid.*, sygn. 399. For Abraham, see p. 66, no. 1, and p. 72, no. 3. For Isaac, see p. 66, no. 16.

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Abraham Leslau, Betsche, 22 (age), no (unmarried), has served a 1-year sentence in the penitentiary due to participation in a theft; 8.3.44 (day of discharge)

No 2

The same (but a bit shorter). [Maybe he was longer in the prison.]

No 3

B. Convicts released from other institutions: Isaac Hirsch Leslauer, 53 (age), yes (married), 3 children, has served a 4-year prison sentence in Sonnenburg²⁴ for theft.

It is clear that Abraham stemmed from a family of career criminals. The famous chroniclers of the Jews of Posen Province, Aaron Heppner and Isaak Herzberg relate:²⁵

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Betsche was the headquarters of a multi-branched gang of rogues, including Jews [citing Thiele, *Die jüdischen Gauner in Deutschland*, Berlin, 1842]. A quarter of the town population lived on theft and by fencing stolen goods. “This was the thieves school,²⁶ known far and wide, to teach

²⁴ Today the village is Słońsk, Sulęcín County, Lubusz Voivodeship, Poland, but when it was in Prussia, it had town rights. The prison was built in 1832 and housed major criminals.

²⁵ Heppner, Aaron, and Herzberg, Isaak, *Aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der Juden und der jüdischen Gemeinden in den Posener Landen*, Koschmin-Bromberg, 1904-1914, 1921, Breslau, 1927-1929, 1034 pp. Koschmin: I. Tuch, 1904-1928, 1,000 pp., including bibliographical references. Betsche, pp. 301-302. For Thiele, see Thiele, A. F., *Die jüdischen Gauner in Deutschland, ihre Taktik, ihre Eignethümlichkeiten und ihre Sprache, nebst ausführlichen Nachrichten über die in Deutschland und an dessen Grenzen sich aufhaltenden Berüchtigsten jüdischen Gauner ...*, Berlin: Auf Kosten des Verfassers, 1843, Vol. II, pp. 188-189. <http://books.google.com/books?id=EmhRAAAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA190&dq=Thiele+Gauner+in+Deutschland#v=onepage&q=&f=false/> and HV6194.J4 T5 (1841). Abraham is listed on p. 303, and his brother Herman is listed on pp. 303-304.

²⁶ Brożek, Dariusz, “W Pszczewie działała prawdziwa akademія szubrawców” [The real work of the Pszczew school of scoundrels], Międzyrzecz, Poland: *Gazeta Lubuska*, 6 September 2009, with photograph of former synagogue. At Leo Baeck Institute, New York City, Edward Luft Collection, AR 6957, Location S 42/5; and online in full-text at <http://www.gazetalubuska.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090906/POWIAT08/632375380/>. The school was founded in the early 19th century and operated for about 100 years. It called itself a yeshiva but was actually a school for training thieves of many kinds, including, but not limited to, pickpockets. The school had a secret tunnel to a sawmill in case the police raided the school. [The

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the thieves the tools of their trade.” Here, too, false witnesses were procured. All types and classes were involved in racketeering, and the elders as well as the town councillors were the worst thieves and fences. Thus, it would be incorrect to talk only about Jewish crooks. However, that Jews are blamed is due to the fact that the public hates thieves and crooks and the thieves’ jargon contains many Hebrew and Judeo-German words. [There was also a school for thieves in Schermeisel.²⁷]

Only in 1832 did the police finally track down the gang of thieves and fences. Investigation of several offenses committed in Berlin yielded clues leading to Betsche.” With the assistance of Meseritz citizens the thieves’ nest was attacked and overtaken. The leaders were removed from office, arrested, and replaced by others. Since then the town has improved.

Besides, Betsche was not the only nest of thieves in the Posen lands. Among additional thieves’ nests discovered and destroyed were those located in Brätz, Bentschen, Blesen, Tirschtiegel, Wollstein, Schwerin on the Warthe, Unruhstadt, and other locations.”

One commentator treated the subject of the individual names of those arrested. In the list of thieves in Betsche, c. 1833, was Isaak Hirsch (Stümper); his son, Abraham Leßlauer (Holländer Zerbe²⁸), born in Betsche; and Hermann Leßlauer (Herzchen), son of Isaak Hirsch, and brother of Abraham Leßlauer. There were several persons with variations on the surname Meyer. The “Grünthal” listed on Abraham’s death certificate and the person listed in Schlatter as Abraham Leßlauer are almost certainly the same person.²⁹

school is mentioned in the *Słownik geograficzny*, Vol. IX, pp. 253-254 at http://dir.icm.edu.pl/pl/Slownik_geograficzny/Tom_IX/253/.

²⁷ Today Trzemeszno, Poland, with a school teaching pickpocketing at that time, per Andrzej Kirmiel, Director of the Regional Museum, Międzyrzecz, <http://www.muzmcz.webd.pl/>.

²⁸ Perhaps “Disappearing Hollander” or Dutchman; see <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GZ04365>; perhaps a reference to the “Flying Dutchman” legend, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flying_Dutchman.

²⁹ Schlatter, Emil, *Jüdische Gaunerbanden zwischen Oder und Weichsel vor 100 Jahren: Ihre Diebes- und Einbrecherschule in Betsche (Kurmark)*, Neudamm, 1939, 38 pp., but no index and no bibliography. Library of Congress MicRR, Microfilm 442/6, no. 20. Nazi but based upon fact. A list of 55 Betsche Jews alleged to be thieves is provided, pp. 12-13. Isaak Hirsch is listed at No. 19 in that list, p. 12. Abraham and Hermann are listed as Nos. 31 and 32, respectively, on p. 13. Additional Betsche Jews alleged to be thieves, pp. 36-37.

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Somewhat later, the great trial may have given rise to a song that embodied the rivalry between Berlin and Vienna:

Es gibt nur eine Kaiserstadt,	There is only one imperial city,
Es gibt nur ein Wien.	There is only one Vienna.
Es gibt nur ein Räubersnest,	There is only one nest of robbers,
Und das heißt Berlin!	And its name is Berlin! ³⁰

In 1847 Abraham stole a valuable chronometer watch from a nobleman and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for it. He served the full sentence [to 1849]. Upon his release, he earned the title "General." Although he started pickpocketing in markets and fairs, he moved on to the then new railroads as a better source. Caught stealing a gentleman's pocketbook on a train, he served a year in prison, incarcerated in the same prison as his father. When they were released, they pickpocketed on trains, but were identifiable by the rural passengers so they could only work at night. Finding rural night pickpocketing unprofitable, they went to Frankfurt am Main. There they gave the detectives 25% of what they stole; they were never incarcerated for more than a few hours. Herman joined them, and they all went to Betsche, a country market town. Then they went into the interior and stole \$1,500 from a farmer. They then went to Breslau where Abraham had shortly before married a girl. They quarreled with a local mob who knew what they stole and from whom the money had been stolen. One of the mobsters, unnamed, attempted to blackmail the Greenthals. They refused to co-operate with him so he wrote to the victim, who hurried from Betsche to Breslau.

All three Greenthals were arrested and committed for trial. After six months in prison, they were each sentenced to seven years of imprisonment in the latter half of 1850 or in the first quarter of 1851.³¹

Abraham married when he was about age 28 and his bride was age 19 or 20. She was from Breslau, in the Province of Silesia. The Breslau birth records do not list a Hannah who would fit, but one entry³² lists in German one Henriette, daughter of David Goldstein, merchant. The mother is listed as Amalie, née Cohn. Both parents resided in Breslau. Henriette was legitimate, born on 17 July

³⁰ May, Arthur J., *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960, ©1951, 532 pp., including bibliographical references in notes, pp. 495-511, bibliography, pp. 513-522, and index. See p. 309. Library of Congress, DB85 .M35; at German Historical Institute, Washington, DC, DB 85 .M35 1951; and at New York Public Library, E 11-807.

³¹ *The Sun, op. cit.*

³² See Microfilm 1184381, Genealogical Society of Utah (Mormons) list No. 71 for 16 September 1830. So the record may or may not be that of Hannah David. The date 17 July 1830 equates to 26 Tammuz 5590 in the Hebrew calendar.

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1830 and delivered by midwife Freundin. However, a problem arises in that the Yiddish version of certificate no. 71, on the right side of the page indicates that the child was named Gittel, and her mother was named Mirel, née Cohn.

Hannah David³³ was sometimes called Davis in the United States, as shown on various marriage certificates for their children.³⁴ The following list shows those persons surnamed David who were naturalized in Breslau in 1814:³⁵

<i>Number</i>	<i>Permanent name adopted by the family</i>	<i>Location on 24 March 1812</i>	
		<i>District</i>	<i>Locality</i>
604	David, Henriette	—	Breslau
605	David, Herz	—	Breslau
606	David, Heymann	—	Breslau
607	David, Jacob Aaron	Rattib.	Bronnek

If, on the other hand, Hannah David's father was, in fact, David Moses, then he may have been the person of that name naturalized in Breslau in 1814 as a result of the Decree of 11 March 1812, as shown on page 30 of the source cited in the *Amtsblatt*.

In 1850 Abraham was the first of the three family members to be sent off again to the penitentiary, and his wife, Hannah,³⁶ was allowed to escort him to prison. Greenthal's wrists were handcuffed

³³ A review of the Jewish marriage records for Betsche show that the couple did not marry in that village, and the Jewish marriage records for Breslau for 1850-1851 apparently have not survived.

³⁴ See Chapter 9 for more information.

³⁵ "Beilage zum 45^{sten} Stück Amtsblatt der Königlich Breslauschen Regierung. Verzeichniß sämtlicher in der Provinz Schlesien Breslauer Regierungs-Departements befindlichen jüdischen Staatsbürger," p. 8, col. 2, *Amtsblatt der königlichen Breslauschen Regierung für das Jahr 1814*, Regierungsbezirk Breslau, Prussia, Vol. 4. JS7.G3 B75. The name of Hannah's parent, as listed in the "Beilage," is unknown, but it is striking that the man not from Breslau has a name not beginning with "H" while all of the listed persons from Breslau and Hannah have first names beginning with that letter, especially when considered in conjunction with various Greenthals marrying so many women named "Hannah," as shown in Federal census records. These include Abraham, his brother Herman, and his cousin Morris, all of whom married women named "Hannah."

³⁶ Typically for the era, Abraham does not mention his wife's name in the *Sun* interview, from which the rest of the information was obtained.

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until his wife persuaded a guard that the handcuffs hurt. So within two miles of the destination,³⁷ his hands were freed, near a dense forest. Liquor was used as a bribe and to dull the guard's senses while he walked in front of the prisoner. Abraham, during a rainstorm, dashed into the woods and safely reached Berlin. There a friend lent him his passport and a small amount of money. Abraham went from Berlin to Hamburg, pickpocketing about \$350 along the way. He reached Liverpool safely and sent his wife \$100. He did some shoplifting in England but was never arrested and might not even have been suspect there. He saved enough for his wife to join him, and they sailed for New York.³⁸ Thus, it could be that Abraham was in Liverpool only long enough for his wife to arrive and then to sail with her to New York City.

Although Abraham indicates that he was in Liverpool and there is no reason to doubt the truth of his statement, no trace of him appears in Liverpool under that name or under any known alias from 1847-1851.³⁹

³⁷ Perhaps Rawicz prison; see n. 20.

³⁸ Presumably, Abraham used the name on the passport and stole all of the money with which he emigrated to the United States. A diligent search has not produced any records of Abraham or his wife in Liverpool. Unfortunately, we do not know the name on the passport, and the records of the Old Hebrew Congregation, Liverpool, found in the Liverpool Record Office, yield no reference to Abraham or to his wife Hannah. Much of the information in this paragraph is from the previously cited article in *The Sun*, New York.

³⁹ Liverpool city directories were issued by Isaac Slater, 1848, by M'Corquodale & Co., 1848, by James Mawdsley, 1849, and by James Mawdsley & Son, biennially, 1851-1859. Liverpool Library catalog: <http://prism.talis.com/liverpool/> and for the archives: <http://archive.liverpool.gov.uk/dserve.exe?dsqApp=Archive&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=Search.tcl/>. A thorough search produced no relevant listing. While it is only speculation, Abraham most likely stayed in Liverpool only long enough to await the arrival of his wife, and they departed together soon after she arrived, probably only days after her arrival. It is not far from Brownlow Hill and Crown Street to the Brown, Shipley & Co. office, agents in Liverpool for the Collins Line.

Before Coming to America (1788-1851)

While we cannot be certain where he lived while in Liverpool both before his wife joined him and after, most likely, he lived in the Brownlow Hills or Crown Street area.⁴⁰ He probably attended what is today called the Liverpool Old Hebrew Congregation, at the time in Seel Street,⁴¹ today marked by a plaque.⁴²

Various shipping companies sailed from Liverpool to New York City on a regular basis and published their schedules in newspapers for the public to know the sailing dates.⁴³ Tickets were sold by agents in the port city and sometimes elsewhere.

⁴⁰ See <http://www.liverpooljewish.com/community/history-face-of-the-jewish-quarter.php>

⁴¹ <http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/Community/lp2/index.htm> See also <http://www.princesroad.org/history.htm> The congregation was Orthodox and Aschkenazic at the time.

⁴² <http://openplaques.org/plaques/7898>

⁴³ See http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/exhibition/2_3.html Brown, Shipley & Co., Liverpool is mentioned in the first advertisement shown from the *New York Times*, 1855.

Chapter 2 The Land of Opportunity (1851-1864)

Having escaped on his way to prison, Abraham could not return to Posen. He already had a relative, William Grunthal,¹ in New Jersey so it may have been logical that he thought he could do better in the United States than in England.

Planning to leave Liverpool for New York City, Abraham would have visited the offices of Brown Shipley & Co., the agents for the E. K. Collins Line, officially the New York & Liverpool United States' Mail Steamship Company. The Brown Shipley & Co. "Counting house" was located at Chapel Street, not far from the docks, approximately four blocks away.² On the docks, Abraham could have seen the American ship Roscius of the Collins Line from New York, it having docked

¹ See n. 22.

² McCarthy, Michael, *The House that Trust Built*, New York: Brown Brothers Harriman, and London: Brown Shipley, ©2010, 29 pp., at 5. <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:ke6Acseiuy0J:www.brownshipley.com/fs/doc/Brown_Brothers_History_10_March_low_res.pdf+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEEsGoA1SCGqlKUr1v2DmFTEo17avpMa0eVvidfUitgnLBUcrWekXYmXOohTWLntM48m8QErnNJTAsfIvdGjtAQY3a0DZU4-4LhsDPWfZcySZVaPECPSfxb23xxAhXyk2UxjmV_cfN&sig=AHIEtbQhDbu8DYJvUgk3V0ynYMogg>. The building at 26 Chapel Street, used by the bank, was not built until 1860.

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in Liverpool on Monday, 24 March 1851.³ The Roscius entered Liverpool for loading by Friday, 11 April 1851,⁴ and actually sailed before Sunday, 13 April 1851,⁵ it having been reported to have sailed on the previous day.⁶

Abraham and his wife, as Mr. and Mrs. A. Green, sailed from Liverpool, England, to New York City on Saturday, 12 April 1851⁷ on the American packet ship Roscius.⁸ He is listed as a “farmer.” They

³ Tuesday, 25 March 1851, *The Daily News*, London, No. 1508, p. 8, col. 2, under “Shipping Intelligence...Arrived.” The ship’s intended subsequent departure on 11 April had been advertised in the Friday, 28 February 1851 *Liverpool Mercury*, No. 2271, Vol. XLI, p. 4, col. 1. That advertisement indicated that the charge was £40 [then, \$164] to buy two cabin passages on the ship (advertised as “fixed at TWENTY POUNDS” each), a considerable sum to spend, even if it was all from ill-gotten gains, and did not include any payment for “Wines or Liquors, but these Stores can be obtained on board,” as noted by Brown, Shipley, & Co. in their regular advertisements in the *Liverpool Mercury* for an unnamed “line of packets for New York.” For some idea of the value of the tickets in terms of current values of the money paid, see <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/relativevalue.php>

⁴ Friday, 11 April 1851, No. 2283 Vol. XLI, p. 7, col. 5, under “Ship News...United States.”

⁵ Monday, 14 April 1851, *The Standard*, London, United Kingdom, No. 8322, p. 3, cols. 5-6.

⁶ Tuesday, 15 April 1851 *Liverpool Mercury*, No. 2284, Vol. XLI, p. 7, col. 5, “Ship News...Saturday, April 12 ... Sailed.” We do not know why the Roscius sailed one day late despite good weather on the previous day.

⁷ Saturday, 24 May 1851 *The Irish-American*, New York, Vol. III, No. 21, p. 3, col 2; advertisement, p. 4, col. 6. See Chapter 3, n. 16, for another time that The General listed himself as a farmer. A review of the April 1851 decennial United Kingdom census failed to produce anyone relevant of that name in Liverpool, thus further reinforcing the conclusion that these names were invented for the trip. The Roscius was scheduled to leave on 11 April 1851. See Monday, 14 April 1851 *New York Daily Tribune*, Vol. XI, No. 3117, p. 8, col. 3, “Foreign Ports.” The office of E. K. Collins was located at 56 Wall St., New York City, and his agent in Liverpool was Brown, Shipley and Co. See n. 2. On Saturday, 17 May 1851 *The Weekly Herald*, New York City, Vol. XV, No. 20, Whole No. 752, p. 160, col. 5, reported that the ship Roscius, a packet, had left Liverpool under Captain Howes on the 12th of April with 416 passengers aboard and had docked in New York City on 11 May.

⁸ For illustrations of the ship Roscius, see <http://www.erniemort.com/jpg/Roscius1.jpg>, <http://www.christies.com/lotfinderimages/d39574/d3957459r.jpg> and

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arrived in New York on Monday, 12 May, and the manifest was filed with New York authorities two days later.⁹ Abraham is listed as age 28 while his wife is listed as age 20, both essentially correct when compared to their real ages. Interestingly, Abraham is listed as from the United States while his wife is listed as being from Germany.

Abraham wasted little time¹⁰ in filing his “Declaration of Intention” to become a citizen of the United States, filing it on Monday, 26 May 1851, two weeks after arrival, in the New York Court of Common Pleas, but under a variation of the name Greenthal. He clearly listed himself as “Greenton.”¹¹ Abraham was probably still in prison in early 1850 so in all likelihood he would have been in Liverpool for less than one year.

Abraham had learned a thing or two in the family business of theft. Abraham’s father Isaak Hirsch had lived in Betsche but did a great deal of theft in Berlin. So too, Abraham soon left Manhattan to live in another jurisdiction, making it harder to find him and harder to extradite him to New York

[http://wetherillfamily.com/rosconscious\[1\].jpg](http://wetherillfamily.com/rosconscious[1].jpg) For the rigging (sails) of a ship, see <http://www.keyshistory.org/ASS-Amer-Sail-Ships.html>

⁹ Retrieved via Ancestry.com

¹⁰ Likely advised by someone already here, such as his relative, William Greenthal; see n. 22. Some states restricted land ownership to citizens so the purchase of real estate in New Jersey may have been the motive for filing the “Declaration of Intention.”

¹¹ See “Try to Use More Than One Source,” *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, Bergenfield, NJ, Volume XXVII, Number 2, Summer 2011, p. 67. A search for the same document on a different subscription website produces a key piece of information not found on the first website consulted. Abraham declared that it was *bona fide* his intention to become a Citizen of the United States and to renounce allegiance to the King of Prussia. In his Declaration of Intention in New York City he alleged falsely that he immigrated to the United States in 1843, probably an indication that he did not use a version of “Greenthal” on the passenger list. He signed with his x mark as “Abraham Greenton.” On Monday, 14 January 1856, Abraham was naturalized under the name Abraham Greenthal in the Hudson County [New Jersey] Court of Common Pleas. He signed his naturalization petition with ‘his mark.’ Perhaps Abraham was thinking in terms of Prussia because there ability to write Hebrew was not counted as being literate. Those who could not sign in Roman letters were “illiterate.” Abraham signed his name in Hebrew in other documents. See Chapter 4, n. 6. There is no “Greenton” listed in the April 1851 United Kingdom census as living in Liverpool. Abraham and his wife were still in Europe when the 1850 Federal census was taken.

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City. He purchased a house and two lots in the Village of West Hoboken, a rather rural village at the time, less than five miles from the ferry dock at Pavonia, New Jersey. The ferry took passengers between Pavonia and New York City.

Abraham and his wife arrived in the United States with no less than \$250.¹² The land purchases occurred initially when Abraham, acting alone, purchased the property at 57 Paterson Avenue, West Hoboken, now Union City, New Jersey, by bargain and sale deed from Martin Genter and wife in fee simple absolute for \$200. The transaction was recorded on Friday, 20 August 1852.¹³ Since Abraham was already married to Hannah, it is difficult to understand how the purchase could have been a proper transaction since Hannah is not listed as his wife on the deed. Abraham, however, was never bothered by niceties in the law that might be inconvenient for him.

The very next day, Saturday, 21 August 1852, Abraham purchased, again alone, by bargain and sale deed a property at what was a vacant lot on the corner of Paterson Avenue and West Street, today 438 Fifth Street, for \$200 from Marcus McCracken and his wife in the former Village of West Hoboken.¹⁴

Finally, on Tuesday, 15 December 1853 the Hudson County, New Jersey deeds register books show that Abraham Greenthal purchased from John Syms and wife of the Village of West Hoboken in fee simple absolute by bargain and sale deed a vacant lot at the corner of Hague and West Streets, today c. 631 4th Street, Union City, NJ 07087. The cost was \$525.¹⁵

About this time Abraham relates that for two years he and his wife shoplifted in New York City.

¹² See Chapter 1, n. 37.

¹³ Hudson County Deeds Liber 25, page 251. Now c. 437 6th Street, Union City, NJ 07087, currently a vacant lot at Hoboken Street, near West Street, in the former Village of West Hoboken. See plan on inside back cover.

¹⁴ Hudson County, New Jersey, Deeds Liber 25, page 269.

¹⁵ Hudson County, New Jersey, Deeds Liber 41, page 668. This lot contained a house and stable.

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Greenthal stole some goods from a store on Barclay Street and bought them back to escape arrest by the Superintendent (then Sergeant) Jourdan.¹⁶ Wisely, Abraham seems to have told this story only after the death of Jourdan, a point that he noted in the interview with the *Sun* reporter.¹⁷

The General did not confine himself to working in New York City. Under “Criminal Record,” the *Springfield Daily Republican* reported, Two pickpockets, both German Jews and one named Abraham Griennthal and the other Jacob Levy, were arrested in Albany on Wednesday morning, just after the arrival of the Hendrick Hudson from New York, on a charge of robbing several German emigrants during the passage from New York. A valuable gold watch and about three hundred dollars in money were found upon them, supposed to be the avails of their industry during the passage. They are known to the police as old offenders, and one of them, Levy, is said to be worth \$100,000.¹⁸

The same story was copied one week later and published by the *Wisconsin Patriot*. IMPORTANT ARREST.—Two German Jews, named Abraham Griennthal and Jacob Levy, were arrested last week at Albany, for robbing German emigrants on their passage up the river in the steamer *Hendrick Hudson*. The evidence against them was conclusive, as they were seen in the act, and stolen money and watches to a large amount were found upon them.—They seem to have pursued the business systematically, going down on the Hudson R. Railroad cars, and returning on each trip of the steamer. Both of the prisoners are wealthy. Levy lives at Hoboken, and is said to be worth \$100,000.—*Mil. Sen.*¹⁹

At the same time, Abraham also lent money on first mortgages in West Hoboken, as recorded in Hudson County mortgage books.²⁰

¹⁶ John Jourdan. See New York Common Council, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York...1868*, p. 160; <http://books.google.com/books?id=XwoAAAAAMAAJ&dq=manual+of+the+corporation+of+the+city+of+new+york&q=Jordan#v=onepage&q=Jordan%2C%20Philipp&f=false/>.

¹⁷ *The Sun*, New York, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Saturday, 23 September 1854, *Springfield, MA*, Vol. II, No. 225, p. 2, col. 3.

¹⁹ Saturday, 30 September 1854, Vol. I, No. 16, p. 2, col. 5. The article is clearly copied from *Mil. Sen.*; the meaning of the abbreviation might be *Milwaukee Sentinel*. In the 19th century it was quite common for a newspaper to copy a story that appeared in another newspaper. A search from 21-29 March 1854 failed to reveal the article in the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*; perhaps it was in the Tri-Weekly edition, not available to the author.

²⁰ Thursday, 5 April 1855. Mortgage Peter Shupp to Abraham Greenthal for \$425, recorded at Hudson County Mortgage Liber 15, pp. 49 and 50; and Tuesday, 15 May 1855 Mortgage and bond

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While the mortgages to Shupp and Abigail Ackerman appear to have been without trouble, the third one to William H. Van Dine, himself a major seller of land in the area, resulted in foreclosure proceedings begun on Wednesday, 23 July 1856.²¹

What seems to have resulted from the lawsuit is that Abraham became a regular client of J. Dunn Littell, who was a political power in Hudson County. Abraham relied upon Littell for a number of matters, as we shall see.

We find Grunthals listed in the 1855 New Jersey State Census for Hudson County, North Bergen Township, but not Abraham.²²

In 1855 Abraham began to appear in criminal courts in the United States, accused of theft-related offenses.²³ Shortly thereafter, Abraham executed a Declaration of Trust followed by similar deeds to transfer property out of his hands, presumably to escape seizure by sureties who paid the sums for bail that had been forfeited to the New York authorities.²⁴ In 1863 Abraham sold his entire holdings

from William Van Dine and wife and Abigail Ackerman to Abraham Greenthal to secure \$1,200 + interest, recorded in Mortgage Liber 15, pp. 228 and 229.

²¹ Abraham Greenthal's Foreclosure on Van Dine *et ux.*, represented by Attorney J. Dunn Littell; New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, NJ, Chancery Court, Unfinished Bundle 280: Bill of Foreclosure filed 23 July 1856 on land that had been mortgaged to Abraham Greenthal on 18 May 1855 and later sold to others notwithstanding the mortgage to Abraham. Summonses served on 24 July 1856, except to those in New York State. Publication order for foreclosure and sale of mortgaged premises for those in New York City, 10 September 1856, published in the *Hudson County Democrat*. Filed on 11 September 1856. Published weekly for at least 6 weeks. Costs of publication, \$4.50. No one appeared in court for the defendants as of 19 November 1856. Order for decree to be drafted and the cause referred to J. Harvey Lyons, a Master in Chancery. Order signed by the Chancellor. Nothing further. It is not clear why the matter was never finally resolved.

²² 1599 William Grunthal Free Adult White Male
1600 Margaret Grunthal Free Adult White Female
1601 Ann Grunthal Free Adult White Female
Third Election District, Friday, 1 June 1855, p. 38.

²³ *The Sun*, New York, *op. cit.*

²⁴ a) Wednesday, 12 March 1856 Eliza Greenthal Declaration of Trust, recorded in Deeds Liber 54, page 159. She declared that she held the premises conveyed to her by Abraham Greenthal solely for the benefit of Hannah Greenthal and would not convey the premises without the consent of Hannah Greenthal. Assignments of mortgages include those of 5 April 1855 from Peter Shupp,

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in West Hoboken to a stranger.²⁵ Abraham seems to have made a \$200 profit on the transaction before expenses. There is no indication that he ever returned to West Hoboken after the sale. The issue of seizing his real estate to pay New York sureties or the State does not finally present itself until 1858.²⁶ Nevertheless, as we shall see, Abraham began to look around for a solution to being

18 May 1855 from William Van Dine *et ux.* and from Abigail Ackerman. The only Eliza Greenthal found in vital records is Eliza Greenthal, female, born 22 October 1857, Manhattan, New York, New York, USA; father: Morris Greenthal; mother: Hannah M. Greenthal; see Family History Library [Mormon] microfilm number: 1315312. See also 1860 U. S. Census record, New York, 1st District, 7th Ward, page 61 [391], line 26; b) Monday, 11 August 1856. Hannah Greenthal to Eliza Greenthal, trust deed. Hannah Greenthal requests Eliza Greenthal to convey the property, including bonds and mortgages, held in trust to Abraham Greenthal. Hannah Greenthal to Eliza Greenthal, Trustee, Hudson County, NJ, Deed Liber 56, page 605. Eliza Greenthal Trustee, conveyance of the property to Abraham Greenthal, together with quitclaim deed from Eliza Greenthal to Abraham Greenthal. Liber 56, page 606; c) Thursday, 4 February 1858 Abraham Greenthal and wife to Eliza Greenthal, bargain and sale deed for \$2,000. Abraham Greenthal's signature in Hebrew letters and signature of Hannelore Greenthal. West Hoboken, Hudson County, NJ, Liber 63, page 712. He signs in Hebrew, she as Hanelon Greenthal; d) Tuesday, 1 November 1859, Abraham and Hannah Greenthal to Samuel Meyer. Land, 100' x 40' between plots owned by Smith Stout and William Van Cleft. Deed drawn 24 October 1859 and signed by Abraham on 25 October 1859 and by Hannah on 31 October 1859. No record of the purchase of this land found. Hudson County, NJ, Liber 75, page 724. For Abraham's additional interaction with Samuel Meyer, see the details of the newspaper report of 19 February 1863, discussed below. "He who sells what isn't his'n, Must buy it back or go to pris'n."—Daniel Drew, per [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_\(finance\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_(finance)); and Tuesday, 2 December 1862. Eliza Greenthal to Abraham Greenthal. Bargain and sale deed for \$2,000. Eliza is illiterate. Recorded on Wednesday, 3 December 1862, West Hoboken, Hudson County, NJ, Liber 96, page 124. [Possibly Eliza Greenthal, daughter of Morris and Hannah M. Greenthal. Eliza was born 22 October 1857, New York City, per 1880 Federal census.] All are located in the Office of the Hudson County Clerk. See plan of West Hoboken on inside back cover.

²⁵ Friday, 13 February 1863, Abraham and Hannah Greenthal, bargain and sale deed to David Finn, for \$2,200, sale of 3 parcels: 1) south side of Paterson Avenue at Spring Street, 2) south side of Paterson Avenue at West Street, 3) north side of Hague Street at West Street, West Hoboken, Hudson County, NJ, Liber 96, page 534. He signs as "prxm," while she signs as Hane Greenthall. Deed dated 9 February 1863. West Hoboken, Hudson County, NJ, Liber 96, page 534. All are located in the Office of the Hudson County Clerk. See plan of West Hoboken on inside back cover.

²⁶ Monday, 22 February 1858 Bail forfeited. See New York (State). Legislature. Senate, *Documents of the Senate of the State of New York*. See New York (State). Legislature. Senate, *Documents of the Senate of the State of New York*, Albany: Printed by E. Crosswell. Library of Congress call number J87 .N7 (for 1865), Vol. III, Eighty-Eighth Session, March 29, 1865, Nos. 56-

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sought by bounty hunters or others seeking to recover lost funds from having been surety on the bail posted with the New York court.

In the meantime, Abraham and his gang traveled to Ohio, pickpocketing on the railroad. He was caught in Cincinnati on the train from Toledo. The methods appear to have been the same as those used on trains in Prussia.²⁷ The three “Polanders” arrested on Saturday, charged with picking the pockets of passengers on the Lake Shore Railroad were released on the evening of the same day, no evidence appearing against them.²⁸ The Monday, 31 March 1856 *Daily Cleveland Herald* article stated in full, “The three Jews arrested on Friday, on charge of picking pockets, were discharged this morning by Judge Abby, there being no evidence against them.”²⁹

102, and <http://tiny.cc/9fk0rw/>. See “Report of the County Clerk of New York, in Answer to a Resolution of March 8, Relative to Judgments Entered and Docketed on Suits Arising on Bail Bonds or Forfeited Recognizances,” Senate No. 70, p. 33 [Abraham Greenthal adjudged to have forfeited bail in the amount of \$2,000 on 22 February 1858] and p. 70 [Judgment obtained against Abraham Greenthal for \$4,000]. Compare the forfeited bail discussed in n. 40. No report of the original arrest has been located.

²⁷ Arrested last Wednesday night, Harris “Levy,” John Levy and Abram Grunthal or Greenthal brought before Judge Abbey [the next day] and each gave \$200 bond in money that they would appear the following Monday after having been arrested for pickpocketing on a railroad car arriving from Toledo yesterday. The gang also steals silk and other valuable goods. Davis, also a Jew, was arrested in Buffalo and thought to be a member of the gang. Most of the article attacks the *Herald* for identifying the accused as being Jews. However, the article accepts that they are “Polanders.” Monday, 31 March 1856, *Cleveland Daily Plain Dealer*, Vol. XII, No. 78, p. 3, col. 3, which reproduces the *Herald* article in full and demonstrating its clear anti-Jewish bias by today’s standards. Apparently, there was a print duel between the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and the *Cleveland Herald* over anti-Semitism without ever using that term. See also Thursday, 3 April 1856 *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Vol. XII, No. 81, p. 3, col. 2.

²⁸ Tuesday, 1 April 1856 *Cleveland Daily Plain Dealer*, Vol. XII, No. 79, p. 3, col. 2. The same column, a little further down, reports a pickpocketing incident on the same railroad without naming the perpetrators. The Saturday, 29 March *Daily Cleveland Herald* article, Vol. XXII, No. 75, p. 3, col. 3, particularly describes the articles alleged to have been stolen as having been found upon the accused. The Tuesday, 1 April 1856 *Daily Cleveland Herald*, Vol. XXII, No. 78, p. 3, col. 3, responded to the *Plain Dealer*, attempting to justify its description of the accused as Jews in a long article. By modern standards the attempt was unsuccessful.

²⁹ Cleveland, OH, Vol. XXII, No. 77, p.3, col. 2.

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On the evening of Saturday, 15 November 1856, an officer from a private policing company, bearing a requisition from the Governor of Maryland, arrived in Jersey City. The requisition was for the arrest of one Isaac Morris, a German Jew, charged with obtaining goods under false pretenses. Accompanied by a Deputy Sheriff of Hudson County, he proceeded to West Hoboken and arrested Morris, whereupon a party of Germans, headed by Abram Grinthal [*sic*], attacked the officers and succeeded in rescuing Morris and attacking the officers. Casper Braise [Parris?] and Jacob Bear were shot in the struggle. When they and Grinthal went to Hoboken, each was arrested and held to bail in the amount of \$2,000 by Justice Browning. On the following day, they made a complaint against the private police officer before Justice Forster, who put him under \$1,000 bond.³⁰

In 1856 and 1857³¹ Abraham and his family continued to reside in the village of West Hoboken, New Jersey, while committing crimes in New York City.

In late January 1858 Abraham was arrested in downtown Manhattan for shoplifting with others. He favored the theft of silk and was well known as a thief in the local area.³² This arrest was the beginning of Abraham's first known American court proceeding for theft, and he clearly looked around for a way to escape prosecution. He turned to his New Jersey attorney, J. Dunn Littell, a power in the New Jersey Republican Party in Hudson County, for help in obtaining a passport although there is no record of such a passport having been issued.³³

³⁰ Monday, 17 November 1856 *Daily Telegraph*, Jersey City, NJ, No. 2,026, p. 2, col. 3. The story was copied in the Tuesday, 18 November 1856 *Newark Daily Advertiser*, Newark, NJ, Vol. XXV, No. 277, p. 2, col. 4.

³¹ Abram Greenthal and Myer Rosenthal, of West Hoboken, gave the required sureties for the appearance of the parties on Thursday, at 4 p. m., to which time the inquest was adjourned. Wednesday, 5 August 1857, *New York Herald*, p. 5, col. 1.

³² An Alleged Shoplifter in Custody. Abraham Greenthal arrested before noon yesterday on a charge of having stolen 11 pieces of silk, valued at \$75, from J. G. W. Feloman's store, 82 Hudson Street. He is alleged to have gone to the store with two other men under pretense of purchasing some clothing. While one diverted the salesman, the other two put 11 vest patterns under their cloaks, and all then left hurriedly. The clerk chased the shoplifters down Thomas Street, where they went into an alley and dropped the silk, trying to escape. Greenthal was arrested by Policeman Wilson, but the others escaped. The prisoner was sent to the Tombs, where Justice Welsh held him for examination. "General Greenthal" is well known in the immediate neighborhood of the New York and Erie Railroad depot. Saturday, 30 January 1858, *New York Herald*, Whole No. 7820, p. 1, col. 6.

³³ Friday, 19 March 1858 Passport application; the State Department reply has not been preserved. J. Dunn Littell, Esq., attorney for Abraham Grunthal, sent a letter to U. S. Representative

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Apparently, “Abraham Hirsch” did not leave the United States at this time because city directories show him as residing from 1858-1860 on Pitt Street, between Stanton and Rivington Streets, New York, NY. It is, of course, possible that “Abraham Hirsch” was not “Abraham Greenthal,” but it would have been in character for Abraham to have hidden in plain sight and paid off police officers, who were then unable to find him. In his interview with the *Sun* reporter, Abraham indicated that he was not convicted in the United States until 1859.³⁴ In January 1859 he was arrested for lifting \$48 worth of goods. He disposed of the evidence to a confederate on his way to jail, but the District Attorney had the bail fixed at \$2,000. Greenthal fled the city, forfeiting the bail. After a year in exile in New Jersey, he made nocturnal visits to New York City, being arrested several times, but the officers always let him go for a consideration of \$25 or \$30. He tried to settle with the District Attorney and finally agreed to pay \$1,000, but he remained a thief. The newspapers were careful to report the District Attorney’s progress and that Abraham was not sent to Syracuse on another charge pending there.

When at the end of August 1859 Abraham forfeited bail, a judge issued a bench warrant for his arrest. Abraham sought to be released or at least not sent to Syracuse.³⁵ Abraham remembered the events in the *Sun* article, “In 1859 Abraham was arrested in Syracuse for pickpocketing but discharged on bail and paid \$1,300 to settle the case. For the next few years he provided information enabling Supt. Jourdan to make important arrests.”

in Congress for New Jersey, Jacob Reynier Wortendyke, describing Grunthal as age 36, 5'8", with dark brown hair, although none on his face, and light blue eyes; a naturalized U. S. citizen (certificate enclosed with the letter). The Archives at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, describe the holdings on Wortendyke, making it clear that the holdings are unlikely to hold anything additional for the period that would be relevant. Wortendyke was a Democrat, who served one term in the U. S. House of Representatives while Littell was a Republican.

³⁴ *The Sun*, New York, *op. cit.*

³⁵ Writ of *habeas corpus* application, re: bench warrant, issued February 1859, \$2,000 bail. Also committed for examination by Police Justice Osborne. Also indicted in Syracuse, per warrant from Judge Ingraham. Not sent to Syracuse but bail surrendered and in the Tombs. Monday, 29 August 1859, *New York Times*, p. 3, col. 2. Police Justice Osborne was Barnabas W. Osborn. See <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?u=1&num=114&seq=15&view=image&size=100&id=mdp.39015051346479/>. Judge Ingraham was Daniel P. Ingraham. See p. 114 of New York Common Council, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York...1862*, <http://books.google.com/books?id=YKQ6AAAACAAJ&pg=PA21&dq=New+York+Common+Council,+Manual+of+the+Corporation+of+the+City+of+New+York&hl=en&sa=X&ei=R04tT92cKeXV0QGetoGUCw&ved=0CDwQ6AEw/>.

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Then, he relates, that with Big Michael [Shanahan],³⁶ a notorious thief, he robbed a “negro” [*sic*] of \$10. He put up \$800 cash as bail, and this was also forfeited. In June 1859 he was arrested on Suspension Bridge [New York, near Niagara Falls] for pickpocketing. He was bailed for cash and less than 2 months later robbed a blind man in Hornellsville, NY of \$150. He posted cash and returned to New York City.

Abraham also related in *The Sun* article that in 1859 he went to Philadelphia and was arrested for burglary, his likeness taken, and he was placed in a rogue’s gallery. However, he was discharged for want of evidence.³⁷

However, Abraham was finally arrested in New York City. The General-in-Chief of Pickpockets Arrested—Officer Startin, of the Fifth ward, arrested Abraham Grunthal, yesterday afternoon, and he was committed by Alderman Brady. He had been arrested a year ago, and escaped, forfeiting two thousand dollars bail. He is said to be "a man of good education, respectable appearance and affable manners, just the last persou in the world to be suspected of pocket-picking. Nevertheless, he is known to the police to be one of the most expert pickpockets in the United States. He is a leader of his associates, and is designated among them by the sobriquet of ‘the General.’"³⁸

The story caught the attention of the only French-language newspaper in the United States, clearly, copied from the *Evening Post* article of two days earlier. “An affable manner, a very respectable air, and a cultivated intellect have earned Abraham Grunthal the title of general, but Grunthal has the honor to command no body of militia. As he has all these talents to rob, the mark of the clever man, the thieves are recognized for the fame of their leader. Last year, the newly established general was arrested and required to provide bail in the amount of \$2,000. Fortunately for him, he found an individual who provided the bail requested; but before the day of his trial, the thief escaped without

³⁶ See “North River Pirates” [the name that his gang called itself] *Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser*, Rochester, NY, Tuesday, 6 August 1878, Vol. 53, No. 185, p. 4, col. 2. <http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper4/Rochester%20NY%20Union%20&%20Advertiser/Rochester%20NY%20Union%20&%20Advertiser%201878%20grayscale/Rochester%20NY%20Union%20&%20Advertiser%2018/>. Shanahan is referred to as “the king of the river thieves.” Shanahan is mentioned in a number of other newspaper articles, such as in *The Evening Post*, New York, NY, Friday, 27 June 1879, p. 1, col. 5.

³⁷ A diligent search in both Philadelphia City Archives and in the Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, failed to turn up any evidence of these events. For a photograph of Eastern State Prison, Philadelphia, see <http://www.hauntingamerica.com/eastern-state-penitentiary/>.

³⁸ Saturday, 20 August 1859, *Evening Post*, New York, Vol. 58, No. 197, p. 2, col. 3.

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remorse, leaving his bail bondsman in trouble. Today the General is again a prisoner in the Tombs, and it is doubtful that anyone will come to his aid [to post bail].”³⁹

In the simultaneous proceedings to try him in New York City in 1859 and send him to Syracuse, Abraham was convicted of the New York City theft. The *New York Herald* offered an in-depth account of the proceedings:⁴⁰

Court of General Sessions Before Judge Russell. A Notorious Thief Convicted. Sept. 12. The most of the day was occupied in the trial of a charge of grand larceny preferred against a man named Abraham Greenthal, familiarly known as “the General,” which terminated in his conviction. He was charged with having entered the tailoring establishment of J. G. W. Phelman, 82 Hudson Street, early on the morning of the 29th of January, 1858, and in collusion with two confederates (who also expressed a wish to be measured for an article of dress), and stealing eleven pieces of silk vesting, worth \$75. The clerk who waited upon them was suspicious of the sincerity of their intentions, and finding as soon as they left that one of the drawers had been emptied of its contents, gave chase to the “gentlemen,” and succeeded in arriving in sight of a tenement house in Thomas Street when Greenthal was in the act of coming out. We should have stated that the clerk raised the cry of “stop thief,” and soon a crowd followed the fugitives, but Greenthal was the only one that was arrested. He was positively identified by the clerk at that time, who gave him into the hands of a policeman. Before he was arrested, he was seen to divest himself of an overcoat, which he handed to a friend in the crowd, but as the officer preferred to hold onto his prisoner, he was compelled to allow the stranger to escape. Subsequently, another officer examined the tenement house and found on the stairs a portion of the property, which Mr. Phelman identified as part of the vesting that was stolen from his establishment.

It will be well to mention that the reason why Greenthal was not tried soon after the larceny, was that he abused the confidence placed in him by his bondsman. The bail was forfeited and the individual who became his bail was compelled to pay the money; but fortunately for the ends of justice, Greenthal was re-arrested, and was placed on trial this morning. He produced no witnesses; and although defended by

³⁹ *Courrier des États-Unis: Organe des Populations Franco-Américains*, New York, NY, Vol. XXXVI, No. 198, Monday, 22 August 1859, p. 2, col. 1, “City Reports.” Translation by author.

⁴⁰ Tuesday, 13 September 1859, p. 10, col. 3. Judge Russell is Abraham D. Russell. See [http://books.google.com/books?id=Zo4_AAAAYAAJ&pg=PA370&dq="](http://books.google.com/books?id=Zo4_AAAAYAAJ&pg=PA370&dq=)Court+of+General+Ses
sions”++Judge+Russell&hl=en&sa=X&ei=3VMtT7DoIqfj0QHfmtW-Cg&ved=0CFgQ6AEwBQ
#v=onepage&q=%22Cou/.

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two ex-City Judges, the Jury, after deliberating a few moments, rendered a verdict of “guilty.” His counsel moved an arrest of judgment, on the ground of a flaw in the indictment, which motion was granted by Judge Russell, who directed the prisoner to be remanded till Saturday, at which time the argument will be heard, and if decided adverse to the prisoner, the City Judge will undoubtedly impose the severest penalty the law will permit him to inflict, he having received information in reference to Greenthal’s history, which, if the statements made in Court are true, is certainly very eventful. It was stated that Greenthal was a noted thief in Russia and Germany, and that for the serious offence of highway robbery, served a long term of years in a Russian prison. He is said to have been well known as a pickpocket to that part of Europe, a profession in which he was eminently successful since his arrival to this country. He confined himself to a particular branch of the profession, namely, the robbing of emigrants, and to do so resorted to adroit and ingenious methods. Being well acquainted with the Old Country, he soon ingratiated himself into the good graces of the emigrants on their arrival, freely conversed with them, clothed himself in similar apparel, took trips on emigrant railroad trains, and after learning how much money they had and where it was deposited, succeeded in robbing his deluded and unfortunate victims. It is said that he has accumulated over \$15,000 by this means, that he is comparatively wealthy, and that he owns a house in West Hoboken, where he resided at the time of his arrest with his wife and a family of five children. Greenthal is an elderly man, but his appearance did not indicate much smartness, certainly very little elevation or refinement. In the event of his acquittal on this charge, the prosecuting officer held an order for his arrest on a charge of grand larceny perpetrated in Onondaga County, where he assumed the name of Abraham Wolf.

The *New York Times* carried a shorter version but does supply some different facts. In the Court of General Sessions before the Hon. Judge Russell. Abraham Greenthal, popularly called “General Greenthal” a very notorious character, said to be of gipsy birth, who has earned an infamous reputation in Europe, especially in Russia and Prussia, as a bandit, brigand, housebreaker, and thief in all branches, and who since his arrival, with his family in this country, has been actively engaged in depredations, was tried yesterday on a charge of grand larceny. On Jan. 29, 1858, Greenthal, accompanied by two men, who managed to escape when alarm was given, went to the store of Mr. J. G. W. Phelman, No. 82 Hudson Street. They went thither at so early an hour in the morning that it was barely daylight, and the store was but just opened. They asked to be shown some cloths, and two of them went to the rear of the store, beneath a skylight, to examine those which were exhibited. They did not purchase any, and, after they left the store, it was discovered that a drawer had been rifled of silk vesting to the value of \$70. On being pursued, Greenthal who had separated from his confederates, commenced to run, and was arrested. The vestings were found dropped on the stairs of a tenement house in Thomas-street, into which he ran. He was released on bail, and absconded, his bail being forfeited. Two weeks ago he was rearrested, and brought up for trial, as we have said,

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yesterday. He was defended by ex-Judge Beebe and ex-Judge Stuart, whose main argument was that his identity was not made out. The jury, however, convicted him after five minutes deliberation. He was remanded till Saturday for sentence.⁴¹

Other New York City newspapers carried briefer accounts.⁴² Abraham explained the strategy in his case in *The Sun* article, as follows:

He was arrested again and held for \$2000 bail. He preferred to be tried in New York City, where he could get five years instead of in Syracuse where he could get eight years. He was sentenced to three years in State prison, and it was alleged that he had been in prison in Prussia for about 14 years, but the judge did not base his sentence on newspaper accounts. New Jersey citizens petitioned Judge Russell on Greenthal's behalf when he sought a reduction in sentence: John Everson, gentlemen; William H. Van Dine, farmer [and major land seller]; John A. Ackerman,⁴³ farmer; Garret Van Vorst, hotel-keeper; and William E. Lanns, builder, all of Hoboken; John Hogue, Justice of the peace at West Hoboken; and Hudson County District Attorney John Littell.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Tuesday, 13 September 1859, New York, NY, Vol. VIII, No. 2490, p. 2, col. 5.

⁴² Court of General Sessions. Before Judge Russell. A Regiment of Burglars and Notorious Thieves Sent to the State Prison: Abraham Greenthal, who was convicted a few days ago of grand larceny, was brought up for sentence. His lawyer moved for arrest of judgment, which was overruled. Judge Russell sentenced Greenthal to imprisonment in Sing Sing prison for three years. Sunday, 18 September 1859, *New York Herald*, p. 2, col. 4.

Court of General Sessions—17 September.—Before City Judge Russell. Abraham Greenthal, the “General,” convicted on Tuesday of grand larceny, was sentenced to three years in the State Prison, his counsel's motion for arrest of judgment being overruled. Monday, 19 September 1859, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 8, col. 5. The Saturday, 17 September 1859 *New York Commercial Advertiser*, Vol. XLIII, p. 2, col 4, carried a similar account.

Convicted on Monday of grand larceny and now sentenced by Judge Russell. Affidavits from Hudson County D. A. and from Justice of the Peace of Hoboken. Newspapers said that Greenthal had served 15 years in prison in the “old country,” but the judge said that he would disregard that. The judge paid attention to New Jersey affidavits and sentenced Greenthal to three years. Tuesday, 20 September 1859, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 4.

⁴³ As to both Ackerman and Van Dine, see n. 20.

⁴⁴ Littell served as Prosecutor of Pleas in Hudson County from 1855-1860 and died on Monday, 18 February 1861, in Hibernia, Florida. See 26 February 1861 *New York Times* death announcement, p. 5, col. 5; <http://www.nytimes.com/1861/02/26/news/died.html/>.

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The Sing Sing Prison Statement of Commitments shows that Abraham Greenthal was sentenced on 17 September 1859 in the Court of General Sessions by Judge Russell of New York County for Grand Larceny to a term of three years, ending on 17 September 1862.⁴⁵

When Abraham went to jail, he was no longer able to supply sellers of his stolen goods with merchandise. Using similar tactics to those used in Betsche, he had set up an establishment outside the city to retail the stolen goods, in this case someone newly arrived in the United States and probably not yet fully understanding what he was doing. That person had a family to support. It is interesting to note that this person and his family, after Abraham went to prison, went to Manhattan and opened a legitimate shop selling hats and steamer trunks.⁴⁶

Even though Abraham was in prison in 1860, he kept his house in West Hoboken and was enumerated there in the 1860 Federal Census for New Jersey, which listed him as well as his wife and children: Abraham Greenthal, age 30; Hannah, age 35; Malvina, age 9; Rachel, age 8; Frances, age 7; Isaac, age 3; and Mary, age 1. The record states that Abraham's and Hannah's parents were born in Prussia, while all the children were born in New York City, and that he was a homeowner in Hoboken, on the date of the census, Monday, 9 July 1860.⁴⁷ The fact that he is enumerated there may indicate that his wife did not see him as being absent for an extended period of time and/or that

⁴⁵ New York State Archives, Record Group A0603-78, Registers of Commitments to Prisons, 1842-1908, Vol. 3, alphabetical.

⁴⁶ "Finding the Location of Someone Whose Exact Address Is Not Shown in the 1860 U. S. Census," Vol. XXII, Number 3, Fall 2006, pp. 38-40. Reprinted with minor emendations in *Forum*, Austin: TX: Federation of Genealogical Societies, Vol. 19, No. 1, Spring 2007, pp. 8-9. Noted in *Gen Dobry!*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 31 January 2007, pp. 4-5, <http://www.polishroots.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=UHunv3zTtvU%3d&tabid=60&mid=377/>, which also mentions related television discussion of the issue and notes an article about the author. That article appeared in *ABC*, Leszno, Poland, on 9 January 2007, p. 4; and "Finding an 1860 location," television program 157, recorded 3 December 2006, televised 10 January 2007. See <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4986031636538380071#/>. 27:40 run time. Noted in *Gen Dobry!*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, January 2007, pp. 4-5. Only online at <http://www.polishroots.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=UHunv3zTtvU%3d&tabid=60&mid=377/>.

⁴⁷ North Bergen Township, Hudson County, NJ, page 90. There was another Abraham Greenthal enumerated with his daughter-in-law and three grandchildren in New York City (Manhattan) on Saturday, 16 June 1860. See U. S. Census for New York, page 51, 383, 4th District of the 11th Ward. Abraham had no profession (retired).

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she hoped for his early release from prison. He was still in prison in early October 1860,⁴⁸ but in mid-November of that year, some of his family members were arrested for receiving stolen lace goods from a New York City burglary. The goods had been concealed in the West Hoboken house, beneath some flooring in the stable on the property.⁴⁹

In a lengthy article entitled “Pickpockets,” dealing with many ethnicities, the allusion to The General is clear although the article never mentions him by name. “The Jews are particularly famous for the facilities they afford pickpockets in disposing of stolen property. Yet there are a large number of pickpockets of Jewish extraction, who are known as ‘the sheeny gang’ (sheeny being the term universally applied to Jews by all rogues). They extend all over the country, are all acquainted with each other, and fraternize more effectually than any others. There are a number of this class living in New-Jersey, who make a regular business of getting on the trains of the various railroads running into Jersey City, and picking the pockets of all unwary passengers. They seldom come across the river, but frequently extend their pleasant excursions to the Western cities. They are very successful, although not so expert as some others.”⁵⁰

One of the ways in which the gang worked was that one of the “stalls” carried a small valise, which he would press directly against the victim’s face or stomach while the robbery was in progress. Another “stall” carried about a dozen empty cigar boxes. These were dropped about the victim’s feet; and there would be great excitement, swearing, pushing, and excited Hebrew ejaculations and

⁴⁸ Representative Scamps. Roguery and its Incidents. Thievery as a Profession. Gen. Greenthal, now in Sing Sing, owns property in Hoboken. Monday, 8 October 1860, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 1, col. 1.

⁴⁹ Recovery of Stolen Property.—On 17 November 1860, burglars entered the store of Messrs. Thomas & William Fisher, on Worth Street, New York City, and stole \$3,000 worth of lace goods. George Shimson was arrested and convicted of the burglary and about \$800 worth of goods recovered. Based upon a tip, detectives went to the cottage in West Hoboken that was occupied by Jacob Ost, Hannah Greenthal, and Hannah Davis, and after a long search, found \$2,200 worth of the missing laces concealed beneath the flooring of a stable on the premises. The property has been taken to New York City and the occupants of the house arrested on suspicion of having received the goods with guilty knowledge. They are detained at headquarters. Friday, 5 April 1861, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 3, col. 6. The *New York Times* article is more accurate as to who was arrested. Stolen lace concealed in house in West Hoboken, formerly tenanted by Greenthal, about 5 miles from the ferry. Mrs. Greenthal still lived there. Mrs. Greenthal and her daughter [*sic*, ? niece], Hannah Davis, age 25, were arrested. Saturday, 6 April 1861, p. 2, col. 3.

⁵⁰ Wednesday, 15 August 1860, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 7, col. 3.

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remonstrances. Sometimes a dirty handkerchief, reeking with snuff, was flaunted in the victim's face. It was an old proverb with us. "God help the man who falls into the clutches of the Sheeny Mob."⁵¹

We do not know if Abraham was still in Sing Sing prison⁵² in Ossining, New York, when one of what must have been the saddest events in Abraham's life occurred. His only son Isaac, born in August or September 1856 and named after Abraham's father, died in West Hoboken on Tuesday, 3 September 1861.⁵³ Abraham does not mention Isaac's death in the *Sun* article.

Instead, Abraham notes in that newspaper article that after he was discharged from Sing Sing, he resided in Hoboken, where he soon stole 14 live geese, and upon conviction, served two and one half years in Trenton State Prison.⁵⁴ The theft caused him to lose the good opinion of the people of Hoboken. The facts are more complicated. He had been indicted for burglary in early February 1863.⁵⁵ Just as he was known in Posen as "The General," so too he was called "The General" in the newspaper article.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Dunlap, Edward W., "Crooks and Their Ways," Sunday, 1 September 1912 *Times-Dispatch*, Richmond, VA, Society section, 4th unnumbered page, Chapter XVIII, col. 2. See <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038615/1912-09-01/ed-1/seq-12/>.

⁵² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sing_Sing/. The website includes photographs.

⁵³ Hudson County, NJ. New Jersey Vital Statistics, <http://www.state.nj.us/state/darm/links/pdf/DeathRequest.pdf/>, Vol. 27/Volume P: Hudson County Births, Marriages & Deaths, 1848-1867; and Family History Library: US/CAN Film 543519 and Film 584566. Vol. P, p. 463, for 3 September 1861, page numbered 464 indicates that Entry 29, Isaac Greenthal, male, age 6 years, 0 months, no profession, died in West Hoboken, having been born in West Hoboken [very likely wrong—See n. 24. The 1860 Federal Census for New Jersey shows that all of Abraham's children were born in New York]. Isaac was the son of Abraham and Hannah Greenthal and died of colic.

⁵⁴ The New Jersey State Archives may hold these prison records, but they are not publicly accessible, due to their disorganized state. For a photograph of the prison exterior, see the website http://www.windsorpress.net/io_hotp.html/.

⁵⁵ Thursday, 5 February 1863 *New York Times*, p. 3, col. 2: New Jersey burglary indictment by Grand Jury of Hudson County—Abraham Greenthal.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 2, p. 23, for the earlier reference.

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Now “The General” made a big mistake. The General was to be prosecuted for the theft of the geese from the home of a neighbor, Samuel Meyer. Meyer kept a store which probably sold groceries; perhaps it was a general store. The General falsely accused Meyer of rape. Things fell apart for The General when his own employee, whom Abraham thought that he could trust, refused to perjure himself for his employer. The case was reported in the *New York Tribune*:⁵⁷

Subornation of Perjury for Alleged Attempt at Rape.—A notorious character, named Abraham Greenthal, who was recently discharged from a three-year imprisonment in Sing Sing for burglary, was placed on trial yesterday afternoon in the Hudson County Court on an indictment of subornation of perjury. It appears that on [Tuesday] the 27th of January Greenthal was indicted by the Grand Jury for larceny on complaint of a Mrs. Meyer, residing at West Hoboken, who charged him with having stolen some geese. On the following morning, while Samuel Meyer was attending prayer in his kitchen, a constable entered and arrested him on a charge of having committed a rape upon Hannah Davis, a woman residing at Greenthal’s house, and was cast into prison. The matter was brought up before the Grand Jury when Caspar Paris, who was in Greenthal’s employ [and who later lived in Greenthal’s house. See 1870 census, Chapter 4, nn. 1 and 2], testified that the prisoner had endeavored to induce him to go before the Grand Jury and swear that, “while at work in the barn, he heard the woman Hannah cry murder, and upon going into the house he caught Meyer in the act of committing the crime,” but in fact he heard no cry of murder, and that the whole thing was a fabrication.⁵⁸ Meyer testified before the Court that he did not commit the crime alleged, never attempted it, and was not at Greenthal’s house on the day alleged. Mrs. Meyer testified that on the day in question her husband, who keeps a small store, intended to go to New-York, but, on account of its being stormy, remained home all day. At 6 o’clock, the Court adjourned for the night. Greenthal has two other indictments pending against him, one for perjury, and another for subornation of perjury.

Conviction of “General” Greenthal.—The trial of “General,” alias Abraham Greenthal, a convict, on an indictment of subornation of perjury for trying to induce a man named Caspar Paris to testify falsely for the purpose of convicting Samuel Meyer of rape, was concluded in the Hudson County Court yesterday forenoon. The Jury, after being out a few minutes, brought in a verdict of guilty. The case will be

⁵⁷ Tuesday, 17 February 1863, *New York Tribune*, Vol. 22, No. 6,824, p. 8, col. 5, New Jersey items.

⁵⁸ Why this employee would so testify and yet continue in The General’s employ and later marry Abraham’s daughter is unclear.

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carried up. An indictment is also pending against Greenthal on a charge of stealing geese from Meyer. Accused was arrested on the latter charge on the 28th of January; and on the following morning he caused Meyer's arrest on a charge of having committed an outrage upon his niece the afternoon previous.⁵⁹

Greenthal sold real property to Meyer on 1 November 1859.⁶⁰ Abraham was also accused of perjury at the same time against one Rутtenbergh, but it is unclear if The General was convicted.⁶¹ His sentence was three years in Trenton State Prison from February 1863 and a total of \$500 in fines.⁶² Although Abraham lived in West Hoboken, New Jersey, at this time, the New York City Directory shows that in 1863 he also kept a residence at 26 Allen Street, between Canal and Hester Streets and sold "varieties," perhaps goods that he and his confederates had stolen. He also used other fences.⁶³ It was at that address that he was registered for the Civil War draft as well.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Thursday, 19 February 1863, *New York Tribune*, p. 5, col. 3.

⁶⁰ See n. 24.

⁶¹ General, alias Abraham Greenthal, was placed on trial on an indictment for perjury against a man named Rутtenbergh. The trial was not concluded at the time of adjourning. Sunday, 22 February 1863, *New York Times*, p. 3, col. 5: Greenthal tried for perjury in Hudson County Court against one Rутtenbergh. Trial adjourned. Saturday, 21 February 1863, *New York Times*, Vol. XII, No. 3561, p. 6, col. 1.

⁶² Hudson County Court on 23 February 1863—Greenthal convicted on 3 indictments for perjury and subornation of perjury and sentenced to three years' imprisonment on each indictment, sentences to run concurrently, with total fines of \$500. Tuesday, 24 February 1863, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 6. The *Newark Daily Advertiser*, Newark, NJ, Thursday, 24 February 1863, Vol. XXXII, No. 46, p. 2, col. 6; and the *American Standard*, Jersey City, Tuesday, 24 February 1863, Vol. 4, No. 184, Whole No. 1053, p. 2, col. 4, each carried a story to the same effect. The judge in the case was most likely Justice Elias B. D. Ogden. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elias_B._D._Ogden and Wheeler, William Ogden, *The Ogden Family in America, Elizabethtown Branch and their English Ancestry*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1907, 531 pp., at pp. 254-255. Available in full-text online at <http://archive.org/details/ogdenfamilyiname01whee> and at Library of Congress, CS71.O34 1907. According to *Gopsill's Jersey City, Hudson City and Hoboken Directory for 1864-65* [compiled from information obtained c. May 1863], p. 459, Justice Ogden sat as a circuit judge in the Sixth District, which included Hudson County.

⁶³ See n. 47.

⁶⁴ Greenthal, Abraham, 26 Allen Street, New York City, age 30, Pedlar, Married, born in Germany. Wednesday, 1 July 1863 Draft Registration, G. 10th Ward, No. 72. Record Group 110,

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One curious matter is that although in early 1863 Abraham was sent to prison in New Jersey, we find that he went west, robbing immigrants and others at this time. We do not know why he was not in prison at this time, but bribery does come to mind. As Abraham told *The Sun*⁶⁵ reporter, he then went west, robbing immigrants. He was an inmate in Xenia, Ohio, having been caught robbing a woman of her pocketbook. He forfeited bail when he left town. He almost certainly returned to New York City.

Both newspapers in Xenia gave accounts of another incident in 1864 but curiously report it as having happened seven days apart. It is probable that The General misremembered the place where he was arrested for stealing the lady's handbag or greatly misremembered the date of the occurrence.⁶⁶

Arrest of Pick-Pockets.

On last Monday evening, as the 7¼ o'clock trains arrived from Cincinnati and Dayton, a gentleman named Washington Mark, who had arrived on the Dayton train on his way to Columbus, called for a cup of coffee at the depot saloon, and in making the change, disclosed a pocket-book containing about \$1600. He replaced the money on the inside of his vest, but as he was passing out of the depot, he was jostled between three men who seemed in great haste to make the Columbus train. In the confusion of the moment, Mr. Mark found that he had been relieved of a considerable amount of his money. The nice little plan of the light fingered gentry didn't work as well as might have been expected, for, in "drawing" the pocket-book, a majority of the bills were scattered on the floor, and the rogues succeeded in "gobbling" only about \$475. Mr. Marks immediately gave the alarm, and H. H. Parry, a police detective from Columbus, who happened to be present, together with several of the bystanders made pursuit, and in a few minutes succeeded in nabbing all three of the *chivalry de industrie*. They were at once put on the train under the charge of Mr. Parry, and escorted to Columbus. The courts of the latter city had no jurisdiction of the case, and on Wednesday, N. F. Tiffany, Esq., proceeded to Columbus and brought the trio back to Xenia again. Their names were Abraham Wolf, John Boyce, and Ludwig Mendleson.

Vol. 1 of 3, Vol. 1320, NM-65, E.172, p. 307. Class I, A-G, New York 5th Congressional District, May and June 1863. Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau, Enrollment Lists and Corrections to Enrollment Lists, 1863-1865, at the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

⁶⁵ New York *Sun*, *op. cit.*

⁶⁶ A diligent search of the *Xenia Torch-Light* from 1860 through 1864 failed to result in the discovery of any report of The General's theft of a lady's handbag.

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On Saturday they had their trial before Esquire Wright.⁶⁷ They were prosecuted on the part of the State by M. D. Gatch, Esq., and defended by Hugh Carey, Esq. Wolf and Boyce were recognized to appear before the next term of the Court of Common Pleas in the sum of \$1,000. and, in default of security, were committed to jail. Mendleson, who claimed to have no connection with the other two, and who proved a good character, gave bonds in the sum of \$200 and was released.

P.S. Since the foregoing was written, we have learned that Wolf and Boyce have given the required security for their appearance at Court, and are now at large.⁶⁸

Robbery—Arrest of the Parties—They are Released.

The Robbery.

On the evening of the 7th inst., a very daring robbery was perpetrated at the Railway Depot, at this city. Mr. Washington Marks, a stock-dealer of Madison county, from the vicinity of London, left Cincinnati on the up afternoon train on the above date. He had on his person, secured in an inner vest pocket, a sum of money amounting to near two thousand dollars. When the train arrived at Xenia, Mr. Mark entered the eating saloon for the purpose of taking a tea lunch. In paying for this he had recourse to his budget of money, from which he took a five-dollar bill, replacing his pocket-book in his vest pocket. He observed two or three persons observing him during this exhibition of his money, but he paid no particular attention to them, and entered the car, as the train was about starting. Just as he was in the act of seating himself, some one threw up a heavy shawl immediately before his eyes, while a second individual thrust his hand into the pocket and drew forth the budget of money. The bills were scattered over the floor in profusion. Then commenced a general grab game. The scoundrels had made a bad job of their desperate undertaking. They succeeded in getting about six hundred dollars of the money, with which they endeavored to escape.

Their Arrest.

Fortunately, Policeman H. H. Peny, of Columbus, happened to be on the train at the time; with drawn pistol he arrested the parties on the spot. There were three of them engaged in the transaction. They were taken immediately to Columbus, where they were kept in safe hands, until last Saturday morning, when they were brought to this city for trial. The proof of the theft was conclusive, and two of the parties, Abram Wolf and John Boyce, were bound over for their

⁶⁷ Probably Thomas Cook Wright. He and the attorneys are listed in Broadstone, Michael A., *History of Greene County, Ohio: Its People, Industries and Institutions*, Vol. I, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1918, 789 pp. See and [http://books.google.com/books?id=txIVAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA560&lpg=PA560&dq="Probate+Judge+Wright"+"Greene+County+Ohio"+Xenia+-State+University&source=bl&ots=1slCdBH4X1&sig=Samhd15bh08K/](http://books.google.com/books?id=txIVAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA560&lpg=PA560&dq=). See p. 585.

⁶⁸ Wednesday, 14 December 1864, *Xenia Torch-Light*, p. 3, col. 2. The actual date of the robbery was 7 December.

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appearance at Court, in the sum of one thousand dollars each, and were taken to jail, while the third one, who was required to give bail in the sum of two hundred dollars, paid his amount and was released.

Their Release.

We learn that the two individuals who were committed to jail, have been released. The Probate Judge, as we are informed, put the bail down to eight hundred dollars each, which was paid on last Tuesday morning, and the rascals are once more abroad to practice their thieving propensities.⁶⁹ According to the New York City Directory, in 1864, Abraham Greenthal lived at 14 Orchard Street, between Canal and Hester Streets, and was a “pedlar.”

Marks may have later sued Greenthal in New York for recovery of the lost money.⁷⁰

Although we cannot be certain that The General was the culprit, January 1865 brought reports of pocket picking on the Hudson River Railroad.⁷¹ The *chevalier de industrie* made a successful haul on the half-past ten o'clock Hudson River train, Wednesday night. No less than five cases of pocket picking occurred between New York and Poughkeepsie. One gentleman lost \$1,000, another \$600, another \$400, and the last two about \$100 each. Most of these cases happened at this city when the passengers got off for refreshments. No arrests were made.⁷²

The next report in the same newspaper appeared on Wednesday, 11 January 1865. Before the Recorder—The case of the people vs. Abram Greenthal was tried before the Recorder this morning. The prisoner is charged with having picked the pocket of Isaac Avery at the Railroad station of this city on the 59th [*sic*, ?29th] of December, of his pocket book containing \$1300. We gather the following facts of the case from the testimony of witnesses.

⁶⁹ Friday, 16 December 1864, *Xenia Sentinel*, p. 3, col. 3.

⁷⁰ Friday, 8 May 1868, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 6. Marine Court, Trial Term, Judge Alker, No. 1167 Marks v. Greenthal. For Henry Alker, see p. 211 of *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York* ... 1869, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015068435703;page=root;seq=279;view=1up;size=100;orient=0;num=211/>.

⁷¹ See also Saturday, 14 January 1865, *The Daily Press*, Poughkeepsie, New York, Vol. 2, No. 123, p. 3, col. 2. Pickpocketing also occurred on the Erie Railroad. Thursday, 9 February 1865, *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, No. 145, p. 3, col. 1.

⁷² Tuesday, 3 January 1865, *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, No. 113, p. 3, col. 1, “Pocket Picking on the Hudson River Railroad.”

The Land of Opportunity (1851-1864)

On the above day, Mr. Avery, who is a cattle dealer, arrived at this station from Rhinebeck in the 3 p. m. train. He got off the car here and went into the Restaurant connected with the station where he purchased a lunch and paid for it from his wallet, after which he returned to the car. At the entrance stood three men, one of which he recognizes as the prisoner, strangers to him, who crowded about him and prevented him from advancing to his seat. While detained here his money was undoubtedly taken, as he had his hand in his pocket and hold of the walled before entering the car, and on reaching his seat it was gone. Search was at once made for the three men but they were nowhere to be seen.

After a hearing the Court decided to hold the prisoner on the charge, and he was remanded to jail. The amount of bail for his release and appearance before the next grand jury has not yet been fixed. Officer Graham made the arrest in New York a few days since.⁷³

The following day the same newspaper gave an extensive report of the trial:

“The Greenthal Case Again.—He is Evidently the King Pin of the ‘Strippers.’”—Since the examination of this man before the Recorder, facts have come to light which will probably lead to his conviction and punishment, and may possible be the means of breaking up the gangs of pickpockets which have infested the Hudson River Railroad of late. A brief review of this case may prove interesting. The act which led to the arrest of Greenthal was the robbery of a sum of money amounting to \$1800 from the person of Isaac Avery at the Railroad Station in this city on the 29th of December. Mr. Avery, a resident of Rhinebeck, a countryman unaccustomed to traveling, and having a large amount of money with him, arrives the Railroad station in this city on the 9 p. m. train on the above date; he enters the restaurant connected with the station, buys some eatables, pays for them from his well filled wallet, which is observed by the three pickpockets, he returns to the car, just inside the car door stand the three pickpockets, they being the only men with the exception of Mr. Avery on the car, he attempts to pass them to reach his seat, but the three block up the passage, and as if unintentional, they crowd him between them, and detain him a minute or so, when he reaches his seat his hand instinctively feels for his walled, which he discovers missing, he notices the three men leave the car in a hurried manner, he follows them, but is detained at the door by a number of ladies who are coming in the car, and on reaching the door the three men are no where to be seen. Mr. Avery returns to the cars which are now in motion and makes known his loss to the conductor who thinks they may be in one of the other cars, they search the train together but the trio are not fellow passengers. Mr. Avery identifies the prisoner as one of the men whom he thinks took his money on that day.

⁷³ Wednesday, 11 January 1865, Vol. 2, No. 120, p. 3, col. 1.

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Mr. Henry Wise, a witness for the prosecution, testified that he knows the prisoner by sight, that he saw him in the ticket office of the Railroad at this station on the above date, was a passenger on an evening train going south, saw the prisoner seated in a car in the rear of the one he was settling in. The importance of this testimony will be observed in the following evidence from Mr. Andrew Gentner, the keeper of a saloon on the Main street railroad bridge:

The prisoner was in my saloon with two companions on the 29th of December, took supper there, represented himself to me as a dealer in cattle and butter, and was on his way to Albany and Troy.

If he was on his way to Albany and Troy as he says, why did he take an evening train for New York, as shown in the testimony of Mr. Wise? This evidence of his conflicting conversation and actions does not speak very favorably for him.

Later in the day telegraphic despatches [*sic*] from New York detectives were received by the authorities describing the prisoner and giving him anything but an honest character, and stating that a large bail would be necessary to secure his presence at Court, as he belonged to a rich gang who would not hesitate to forfeit a pretty large bail to effect his escape. Acting upon this suggestion the Recorder immediately fixed his bail at \$5,000. Future developments proved the importance of this prompt action. A number of the prisoner's friends and pals were here as bondsmen, supposing that the amount would not exceed \$1,000 or \$1,500. From various quarters intelligence has been received which stamps this man as a bad character. Developments are now in progress which it would not do to make public at present, as the ends of justice might be prevented by so doing.

In appearance Greenthal is very unprepossessing, is about five feet eight inches high, dark complexion, brown hair, inclined to curl, rather spare in front, grey eyes and wears side whiskers and imperial, was dressed in dark clothes throughout and wore a light felt hat.

Recorder Robinson deserves the praises of the community for his prompt and efficient action in this case.⁷⁴

Greenthal applied to have his bail reduced about a week after having been charged. The decision was reserved until the following day, Wednesday.⁷⁵ On that day, the case was reviewed in court:

⁷⁴ Thursday, 12 January 1865, Vol. 2, No. 121, p. 3, col. 1.

⁷⁵ Tuesday, 17 January 1865, *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, No. 125, p. 3, col. 2.

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“The Case of Greenthal.—Application having been made to the Court to reduce the bail of this person, after hearing it was finally agreed to reduce the bail to \$2,000. James H. Weeks⁷⁶ became his bondsman for this amount, and he was released, but immediately re-arrested on complaint of a man named Bernhard Henn from Iowa,⁷⁷ for an alleged similar crime. The hearing on this new charged was put down for 8 o’clock, but the witness Henn having left the city it is doubtful if the case is heard. The counsels for the prisoner and people were arguing on this point at the time of going to press. Messrs Weeks and Brundage counsel for the prisoner are endeavoring to get him released on the \$2000 bail. The District Attorney on the other hand is endeavoring to have the trial postponed until to-morrow in order to secure the attendance of Mr. Henn as a witness.⁷⁸

The following day, the same newspaper reported, “The Case of Greenthal.—The Recorder rendered a decision in the case of Greenthal yesterday afternoon, releasing him on \$2,000 bail. Those acquainted with his case give it as their opinion that he will appear before the next grand jury to answer to the charge.”⁷⁹ Similarly, after quoting the *Press* verbatim as the news appeared in n. 61, the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* added, “Since the above was written, Recorder Robinson, in view of the fact that the Iowa man could not identify Greenthal as the one who robbed him, and taking in to consideration the numberless affidavits presented by the prisoner’s counsel, reduced the bail to \$2,000, which was assumed by Mr. James H. Weeks, Greenthal’s counsel, and the prisoner was released. Thus, then the affair is settled until the next Grand Jury meets.”⁸⁰ No further reports about Greenthal’s case being considered by the Grand Jury have been found in any New York newspapers.

The following report appeared in the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* with the presumed thief unnamed, but can there be any doubt from the *modus operandi* who that person might have been, given that he was in the area at the time? Attempt at Pocket Picking. During the exhibition of the fat cattle, in the rear of Fitchet’s stable, a New York thief reached into a countryman’s pocket and drew therefrom his wallet. The countryman [meaning a farmer] feeling the thief’s hand, turned suddenly around and demanded his property. The thief became indignant, and denied knowing anything about it, saying, with an air of injured innocence, that he was an honest resident of Poughkeepsie city, and

⁷⁶ <http://tiny.cc/del0rw>

⁷⁷ A former U. S. Representative in Congress. See <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=H000500/>.

⁷⁸ Wednesday, 18 January 1865, *The Daily Press*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, No. 126, p. 3, col. 2. There are no further reports of Bernhard/Bernhart Henn appearing at any trial involving Greenthal in 1865.

⁷⁹ Thursday, 19 January 1865, Vol. 2, No. 127, p. 3, col. 2.

⁸⁰ Thursday, 19 January 1865, Vol. 5, No. 1273, p. 3, col. 2.

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not a thief, and if he (the farmer) would look on the ground, he would probably find his wallet. Glancing downwards, the countryman saw the pocket book lying upon the ground, the thief having thrown it there when he found that he was detected. No arrest was made.⁸¹

In fact, Greenthal did not appear. There is one final reference to Greenthal in *The Daily Press* of Poughkeepsie on Friday, 3 March 1865. "Pickpockets Around Again.—It is some time since we have had to chronicle a case of pocket picking in this city. The arrest and incarceration of Greenthal having frightened the thieves away from our station, but their stay was only temporarily [*sic*]. Yesterday morning a gentleman from Hudson, a passenger on the 10 a. m. down train, while walking about the station, had his pocket picked of his purse containing about \$85. He was listening to the playing of the Eastman College Band, who were en route to Washington. He thinks the pocket book must have been taken at this time."⁸²

Given that there was no trial, it may be that The General took the opportunity to leave the country instead of facing almost certain conviction.

⁸¹ Monday, 23 January 1865, Vol. 5, No. 1276, p. 3, col. 2.

⁸² Vol. 2, No. 164, p. 3, col. 1.

Chapter 3 Dishonest Abe, or Moral Indignation Due to Bribery (1865-1870)

While we do not know with certainty who sent A. Grenthal a letter¹ at the U. S. Post Office, New York City, it seems likely, based upon subsequent events and the fact that Abraham's parents were already deceased, that it was his brother Herman who sent Abraham a letter to inform the latter that he, Herman, had arrived in Brazil and was assessing business prospects for the "family business." Abraham moved his family frequently, and it was his custom to move after each arrest² so his brother would have been hesitant to send a letter to a residential address and would likely send a letter to "general delivery" in New York City instead. Thus, no stranger would read the letter and discover any "business secrets."

According to the interview in *The Sun*, at this point in Abraham's career, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, he robbed a man of \$1,500. His bail was set at \$2,600, and he posted it with the court clerk and left the city. He next picked the pocket of a Mr. Lawrence in Poughkeepsie. He posted \$2,500 bail and left the city. He again gave bail and forfeited it. He was arrested a third time and again taken to Poughkeepsie where he spent several months in jail. His total cost of this event was \$8,000. In 1865 until he left the United States, Abraham was in Poughkeepsie, New York.³

It is clear from the *Sun* article that Abraham was morally indignant at having had to pay so large a bribe, and he was determined to leave the United States, presumably to join his brother in Rio de Janeiro. As Abraham tells it in the *Sun* article, he sailed for Brazil to join his brother, but not finding pickpocketing profitable, he left Rio de Janeiro after 3 months. Meanwhile, his brother was convicted of robbery and sent to prison for five years at hard labor [which must have begun c. 17 July 1865]. Harris served out his term [to c. July 1870].⁴ Research has indicated more facts of the events, but apparently all Brazilian archival records no longer exist. Nevertheless, we can find some published ones from Brazil.

¹ Letter in *postae restante* for A. Grenthal. Friday, 27 January 1865, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 3. See Luft, Edward David, "Describes New Source for Determining When Immigrant Arrived in U. S.," *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, Bergenfield, NJ, Vol. XXV, No. 3, Fall 2009, p. 67, and website listed there.

² *The Sun* article, *op. cit.*

³ See nn. 33 and 34, this chapter.

⁴ However, see n. 49, this chapter. Herman was in the United States by 21 April 1870.

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Abraham and his entire family sailed on Thursday, 18 May 1865, from New York City for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on the British bark *Campanero*, under Capt. Darling, its first port being Bahia,⁵ and arriving in Rio de Janeiro on Monday, 31 July 1865, aboard the same ship under Capt. J[ames] A. Darling.^{6, 7}

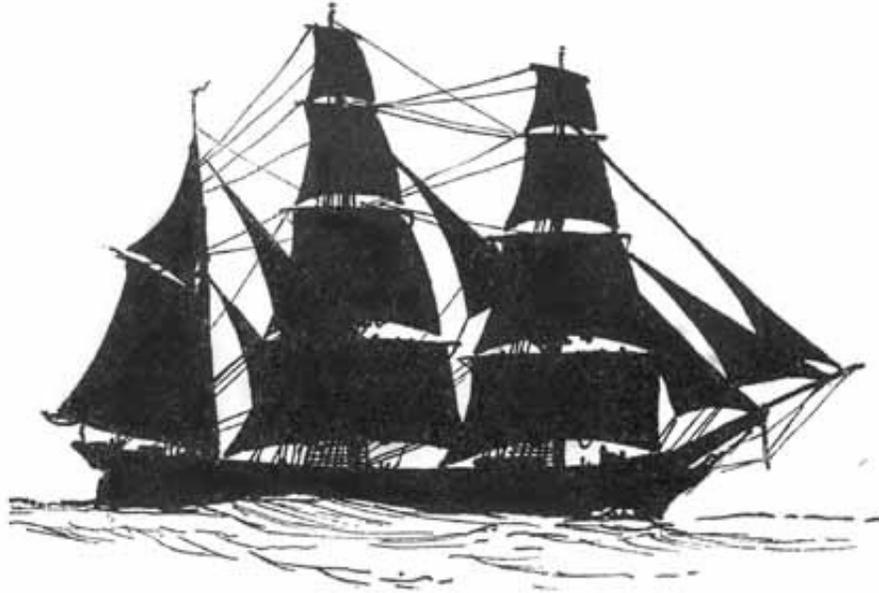
⁵ *The Sun*, Baltimore, MD, “Shipping News,” 19 May 1865, Vol. LVII, Issue 3, p. 4.

⁶ *Correio Mercantil*, Tuesday, 1 August 1865, Vol. 22, No. 209, p. 3, col. 7. The newspaper is held in the Library of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, Av. Augusto Severo, 8, 9 / 13º andar - Glória, 20021-040, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, biblioteca@ihgb.org.br. The Library is on the 10th floor. In the Antunes de Oliveira book, discussed in the next note, from which the information was originally taken, the exact transcription reads “Campanere” and “J. A. Darling,” which are incorrect, and the vessel is not identified as a bark. The ship was the *Campanero* and the Captain was J. A. Dowling; built 1859, and owned by Pendergast Bros. See <http://library.mysticseaport.org/initiative/SPSearch.cfm?ID=43967>, showing that the ship was English but built in Baltimore, Maryland. [Thanks to Virginia Wood, formerly of the Library of Congress, for this citation. Not all ships were listed in *Lloyd’s Register of Shipping*. The Americans were actually more comprehensive.] Although it seems unlikely, one possibility for the name *Campanero* may be that it derived from the Brazilian crustacean *Canthocamptus campaneri*. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canthocamptus_campaneri/. [Thanks to Marco Fiaccadori, Ph.D., for this citation.] “Campañero” in Spanish means “comrade” or “companion.”

⁷ Antunes de Oliveira, Betty, ed., *Movimento de passageiros norte-americanos no porto do Rio de Janeiro, 1865-1890: uma contribuição para a história da imigração norte-americana no Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro: [s.n.], 1981, ©1982, 468 pp., including bibliography, p. 469, and index, pp. 397-468. F2659.A5 O45 1982. Chiefly tables. See listing for “A. Grunthal,” p. 4. No onward destination is listed. The code preceding the rest of the entry is 01-08-209-08-07, indicating that the *Correio Mercantil* article appeared on 1 August 1865, in issue 209, p. 8, col. 7. See also Enete, Joy, *The movement of North-American passengers, Port of Rio de Janeiro, 1865-1890: a contribution to the history of North-American im[m]igration to Brazil: a supplementary guide*, Rio de Janeiro: J. Enete, 1986, 12 leaves, including Portuguese-English glossary, leaves 9 and 10, and bibliography, leaves 11-12. F2659.A5 O45 1982 Suppl. See also Luft, Edward David, “He Left the United States: Where and When Did He Go?” *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, Bergenfield, NJ, Vol. XXVI, No. 4, Winter 2010, pp. 29-31. DS101.A87. Greenthal’s visit to Rio de Janeiro and Recife, Brazil, with his family discussed, using one of his aliases, Abraham Leslauer.

Dishonest Abe, or Moral Indignation Due to Bribery (1865-1870)

Barks have a distinctive pattern of sails.⁸



- Bark -

We do not know if an article which appeared in the *Correio Mercantil* refers to Herman,⁹ Abraham's brother, but it is the only article which indicates the arrest of a foreigner for robbery and which does not mention a name, an indication that the victim, being a high-ranking person, wanted no publicity.

No justice or prison records have survived from the period to indicate the name of Herman Greenthal or any variation thereof. Indeed, few records of justice with respect to foreigners have been preserved in Rio de Janeiro, and apparently a fire some years ago destroyed prison records for the area. A modern photograph of the Casa de Detenco [House of Detention], where Herman would have been held initially in Rio de Janeiro, is available.¹⁰

⁸ For the design of a bark and of a brig, see <http://www.keyshistory.org/ASS-Amer-Sail-Ships.html/>.

⁹ The foreigner was arrested on 6 August and held in prison for robbery. Tuesday, 8 August 1865, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Vol. XXII, No. 216, p. 2, col. 4, under "Estatistica da Cidade."

¹⁰ The Casa de Detenco is pictured on the website <http://riodejaneiroqueeuamo.blogspot.com/2009/12/casa-de-detencao.html/> [in Portuguese].

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However, by calculating the dates of arrival and departure, it appears that Abraham, realizing that he could not bribe his brother out of prison, perhaps because the victim was of high rank, chose to flee Brazil with his entire family. The most likely ship that he took was the English bark *Tichler* [*sic*]¹¹ left Rio de Janeiro for “Portos do Norte”¹² [northern ports]. This was the last ship from Rio de Janeiro to enter the harbor at Recife¹³ prior to the sailing of the *Jura*, discussed below. This vessel was probably the first ship that Abraham and his family could book after arriving at the quayside in Rio de Janeiro subsequent to realizing that he needed to flee Brazil. The ship reached port in Recife, where Abraham and his family transferred to the English Brig *Jura*. Abraham is listed on the manifest of that ship as leaving Recife under the name of Abraham Green, with his wife, 4 children, and 3 servants.¹⁴

Thus, the family returned from Pernambuco (probably Recife) to New York City on the Br[itish] Brig *Jura*, Captain James Day, Master.¹⁵

¹¹ Properly *Tickler*, 362 tons, out of Liverpool, built 1854, and owned by Friend & Co., per *Lloyds Register of British and Foreign Shipping*, http://books.google.com/books?id=kTYSAAAAYAAJ&pg=PT513&dq=Lloyds+Register+of+British+and+Foreign+Shipping+1865&hl=en&ei=zTSbTa3uEYqDtwelcGzBw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDQQ6AEwA/ under Brown, master, 487 tons, with 11 ballast (cargo).

¹² *Correio Mercantil*, Sunday, 27 August 1865, p. 3, col. 7.

¹³ *El Diario de Pernambuco*, Recife, Brazil, Vol. XLI, No. 206, Saturday 9 September 1865, p. 2, col. 6. Also cited as “A ship that entered the harbor of Recife on 8 September 1865 after 12 days passage from Rio de Janeiro—The English bark *Tickler* of 487 tons, Captain John Brown, equipage 13 (cargo), in ballast, to Mills Latham & C.” *Jornal do Recife*, Recife, Brazil, Vol. 8, No. 208, Saturday, 9 September 1865, p. 1, col. 6.

¹⁴ *El Diario de Pernambuco*, Recife, Brazil, Vol. XLI, No. 209, Wednesday, 13 September 1865, p. 3, col. 2. English brig *Jura* under Captain Day departed for New York City, Tuesday, 12 September 1865, with a cargo of sugar. See also *Jornal do Recife*, Recife, Brazil, Vol. VIII, No. 211, Wednesday 13 September 1865, p. 3, col. 3. The English brig *Jura* under Captain Day left for New York on Tuesday, 12 September 1865 with a cargo of sugar.

¹⁵ See note 8, above, for the source of the illustration.

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The *Jura* landed in New York City on Wednesday, 16 October 1865.¹⁶ A search of the Internet shows that it was customary to list the province rather than the city in Brazil as the point of embarkation or disembarkation of sailing vessels. The province of Pernambuco, capital Recife, is far from Rio and on the way to New York City. In the manifest Abraham's age is incorrectly listed as 47, but he is listed as a farmer, and his wife is listed as age 43.¹⁷

Clearly, the trip to Rio de Janeiro had been a disaster for Abraham, and he decided to return to New York City rather than go to Liverpool or Berlin. Evidently, it was better to pay large bribes in the expectation of larger profits in the United States, the land of opportunity, even for career criminals.

¹⁶<http://library.mysticseaport.org/initiative/SPSearch.cfm?ID=651653/> and http://books.google.com/books?id=kTYSAAAAYAAJ&pg=PT550&dq=lloyd's+register+of+shipping+1865&hl=en&ei=hnyPTOrlNcL58AbA0fTNDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CDgQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false/. The General also listed himself as a farmer when he immigrated to the United States from Liverpool. See Chapter 2, n. 2.

¹⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.ancestry.com/>. William Greenthal, listed on the manifest, is almost certainly the same one enumerated in the 1855 New Jersey State Census. See Chapter 2, n. 10. Abraham was then age 43 See Chapter 1, n. 1.

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Back in New York City, Abraham resumed his former activities. He relates in the *Sun* article that he went to Erie, PA where he robbed a commercial agent of \$19 and some railroad passes. He was arrested and placed under \$1,000 but gave \$1,500 to a resident of Erie to raise bail and then skipped town.

He next broke into a fur store in Litchfield, MA.¹⁸ A portion of the stolen property was found in his possession. He was indicted but promised some things to the District Attorney, who pigeon-holed the papers. Returning to New York City, he stopped in Providence, RI. He was arrested with a female partner for shoplifting. He escaped punishment by sacrificing her. He was a notorious thief for 36 years, according to the *Sun* article.

The *New York Times*, sometime later, reported that in 1866 General Greenthal lived on Elizabeth Street. He informed on another criminal, having had a fight with him in the Bowery.¹⁹

The above recitation of crimes does not come close to describing how busy Abraham had been in practicing his profession during this period, as the newspaper articles below will show.

Stolen Silk Recovered. Casper Paris and Abraham Greenthal arrested and charged with having stolen a bale of raw silk valued at \$3,500 from the store of John Riels, 36 Walker Street. The silk was stolen on 11 December and no clue of it was discovered until a man offered it for sale on 10 January at the store of Bernstein & Brothers, 324 Canal Street. Mr. Bernstein, believing that something was wrong, agreed to purchase the silk, delivered the next day. Mr. Bernstein told the police. The accused were arrested at their residence, 184 7th Street. The pair were detained for examination.²⁰

As the *Evening Post* told it, Recovery of Stolen Property. Casper Paris and Abraham Greenthal were committed to the Tombs this morning on a charge of having stolen \$3,500 worth of silks from the store of John Ruis, No. 36 Walker Street, on the 11th ultimo. No sign was obtained in regard to this property until the 10th instant, when some of the silks were offered for sale to Bernstein & Brother, of 324 Canal Street. Mr. Bernstein, suspecting that the goods had been stolen, agreed to buy them. Before they were delivered he made the facts known to Captain Perry, of the Fifth Ward police. That

¹⁸ While there are towns of Litchfield in Connecticut and in New Hampshire, there is no such location in Massachusetts. There is, however, a Pittsfield, Massachusetts. See n. 31, below.

¹⁹ Saturday, 30 August 1873, p. 2, col. 4.

²⁰ Monday, 15 January 1866, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 4, col. 2.

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officer arrested the carman who brought the goods. Mr. Ruis identified the silks as part of those stolen from the store. The carman gave information which led to the arrest of the accused, and they were detained for examination.²¹

The *New York Herald* carried a similar story. Cooper [*sic*, should be “Caspar”] Paris and Abraham Greenthal were arrested at 184 Seventh Street on Saturday evening on a charge of having been concerned in the robbery, on Thursday last, at 36 Walker Street. of over three thousand dollars’ worth of raw silk, and were yesterday committed to the Tombs²² for examination. All of the stolen property was recovered.²³

Less than nine months later, Abraham was again in the newspapers for his exploits. Wolff Meyers, *alias* “Greenthal,” arrested at South Ferry, New York City. His photograph taken. He had long been wanted.²⁴

Abraham managed to stay out of the news for another nine months but then was arrested for another theft. Abraham Greenthal was up on a charge of stealing a lot of shirts from William Robinson. He denied the charge; but as he could give no good reason for the shirts being found in his possession, he was committed to answer at the Special Sessions.²⁵

Despite the court proceedings, the very next day, Abraham was in New Jersey, robbing a woman whose troubles were spread all over the papers. Nevertheless, she was a very determined woman

²¹ Monday, 15 January 1866, p. 3, col. 9.

²² For photographs of the original building, officially “New York Halls of Justice,” see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:New_York_Halls_of_Justice.jpg/ and <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3b10958/>.

²³ Tuesday, 16 January 1866, *New York Herald*, p. 4, col. 3.

²⁴ Tuesday, 4 September 1866, *New York Times*, p. 8. col. 6. [In 1867 according to the New York City Directory, Abraham Greenthal lived at 101 Elizabeth Street, between Grand and Hester Streets, and was a pedlar. He lived on Elizabeth Street in 1866 as well.]

²⁵ Tuesday, 9 July 1867, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 4, col. 4, before Judge Dowling in the Tombs Police Court. For Joseph Dowling, see p. 82 of New York Common Council, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York*, 1866; <http://tiny.cc/xjkl1rw>.

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whose personal life did not deter her from pursuing Abraham as a thief. On 9 July Mrs. Caroline Mitchell of Union Hill, Union Township, was awakened by a noise in her room at 3:30 a. m. and upon looking up saw the notorious convict, Abraham Greenthal, in the act of robbery. She immediately jumped out of bed and grappled with him. After a severe struggle in which she was roughly handled and bruised, he made his escape with jewelry and clothing [details given]. The following morning Mrs. Mitchell proceeded to New York City where she caused his arrest for burglary. Mr. Howe, his lawyer, secured his discharge before a judge on the basis of want of jurisdiction. So Mrs. Mitchell returned to Hoboken and went before Justice Pope, making an affidavit against Greenthal for burglary. A warrant for his arrest was issued, but the police have not yet found him. On 10 July, two young men, Alexander Ridge and Abraham Hammel [*sic*, ? Hummel], came to Mrs. Mitchell's house and delivered to her the principal portion of the stolen goods. Officer Davis entered the room and took them into custody, and upon Mrs. Mitchell's affidavit before Justice Pope, charged them with being accessory to the robbery. They were committed to the County Jail. On Saturday afternoon the accused had a hearing before Justice Pope. For the prisoners John H. Whitmore swore that the prisoners were clerks in the employ of Mr. Howe of New York, employed as Greenthal's counsel. Upon these facts being elicited, the accused were discharged on the ground that there was no criminal intent on their part.²⁶ The property was alleged to have been worth \$400, a substantial sum.²⁷

It is to be noted that this is the first time that we know for certain that William F. Howe represented Abraham. Howe was one of the most successful and most notorious lawyers in New York City. He was also the most expensive attorney in the City.²⁸

Mrs. Mitchell was a woman of some repute. Union Hill. Charged with Keeping a Disorderly House.—Justice Pope of Hoboken heard a complaint against Mrs. Caroline Mitchell, proprietress of a public house at Union Hill, on a charge of keeping a disorderly house. She also sells liquor at the house without a license. Justice Pope issued a warrant, executed by special agent Davis, who took the accused into custody. Bail was fixed at \$1,000 for her appearance at October term. Mrs. Mitchell is the same woman who caused the arrest of the accomplished rogue and burglar, Greenthal, in New York a few weeks ago since, for entering her sleeping room in the night and stealing jewelry and wearing apparel valued at from \$500 to \$600. She had a rough and tumble with the old scamp, but he succeeded in getting away with the property to New York, where she caused his arrest the

²⁶ Monday afternoon, 15 July 1867, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 4, col. 3, City And Suburban Facts: New Jersey.

²⁷ Thursday, 18 July 1867, *Syracuse Daily Standard*, p. 2, col. 4.

²⁸ Rovere, Richard Halworth, *Howe & Hummel, Their True and Scandalous History*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, [1985], ©1947, 169 pp.

Dishonest Abe, or Moral Indignation Due to Bribery (1865-1870)

next day, but he was discharged for want of jurisdiction, and has since kept out of the way. Mrs. Mitchell is well known in the purlieu of New York, where it is alleged she was, for years, the proprietress of a fashionable brothel.²⁹

It will be remembered that Abraham recounted in his interview published in *The Sun* article of Saturday, 7 October 1871, that he was apprehended in “Litchfield, Massachusetts” with some of the property stolen from a fur store, allegedly in that town.³⁰ Now some of the stolen goods surfaced in New York City in the hands of a Greenthal. Clara Greenthal and a man named Manasseh M. Goldman were arrested in New York on Friday, at the house in 19th Street, on suspicion of having received furs stolen in October last from the store of Dodge & Sloan of the town. It appears that at the time stated the store was entered and some valuable furs were stolen. Three persons were arrested about that time, and from information obtained from them the goods were traced to the house of Horace [? Maurice] Greenthal, in 19th street, in that city, an alleged receiver of stolen goods. A fur collar, which was identified by Mr. Dodge, as his property, was found in the possession of the daughter of Greenthal. She said that she had received it from Goldman. Both were arrested and committed for examination.³¹

Abraham liked to travel. An old case was now resurrected in upstate New York. We hear of Abraham on trial in Poughkeepsie, New York. A Sly Thief: Poughkeepsie, 14 October 1868. In January 1865, Abraham Greenthal was arrested in New York and brought to this city [Poughkeepsie], charged with picking Isaac Avery’s pocket at the depot here of \$1,100. Greenthal gave bail, depositing \$1,500, and afterwards forfeited it. He was again arrested in New York last Summer and again gave bail, once more depositing the money here. His case was called, before Judge Barnard,³² in the Circuit here today, and Greenthal was present. When the court took a recess for dinner everything was in readiness for his trial, but after dinner, when the prisoner was called on to appear,

²⁹ Saturday, 24 August 1867, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, Vol. I, No. 98, p. 4, col. 5.

³⁰ See n. 18.

³¹ Thursday, 23 January 1868, *The Pittsfield Sun*, Vol. LXVIII, No. 3514, p. 2, col. 2.

³² See: Chester, Alden, with E. Melvin Williams, *Courts and Lawyers of New York: A History, 1609-1925*, Clark, NJ: Lawbook Exchange, 2005- , Vol. 3, including bibliographical references. Originally published: New York and Chicago: American Historical Society, 1925. KFN5078.C469 2005, p. 932; <http://books.google.com/books?id=07IF9RMUR2IC&pg=PA946&lpg=PA946&dq=“Joseph+F.+Barnard”+“New+York+City”+“Justice”+“Supreme+Court”+“Barnard+College”&source=bl&ots=RG2FBGXBVP&sig=rqhRU9hZ7QMcahv/>.

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it was ascertained that he had eloped and again forfeited his bail.³³ However, he was later arrested and sent to jail.³⁴

In the Court of Oyer and Terminer, the Hon. Joseph F. Barnard presiding,

Abram Greenthall [was placed on trial] for larceny, in robbing one Isaac Avery, of Greene County, by occupation a drover, of eleven hundred dollars at the Poughkeepsie Depot in December 1864. Greenthall was indicted in January 1865, and gave bail for \$1,500 by depositing that amount in the bank, subject to the order of the Court. When his case was called in March following, he did not appear and his bond was forfeited. The present District Attorney, Wm. T. Thorn, hearing that Greenthall was in New York last July, sent a special request by an officer that he wanted to see him in Poughkeepsie. Greenthall appear and gave a new bond in the sum of \$1,500, and his case was called on to-day about 12 o'clock. After Mr. Avery, the plaintiff, had been sworn the Court adjourned until 2 o'clock

Two p. m.

The case of Greenthall was to be resumed, but the prisoner had gone to Lewisburgh, or some other place. Officer Hamlin, when coming toward the Court House after dinner, met, as he thought, Greenthall in Gate St., but was not positive. So he came directly up street to ascertain when, lo! The prisoner was nonest [*sic*]. Mr. Hamlin procured the services of Officer Furman and started in pursuit. They traced him down the railroad track as far as Mr. Fox's, where they got information of an employee on the railroad that a person bearing his description had stopped and asked for a drink of water. They got in sight of him near Milton and arrested him at Barnagat. When he saw the officers coming he tried to hail a schooner nearby, but the offers were on the alert and arrested and brought him into Court about four o'clock.

Great credit is due both officers Hamlin and Furman for the prompt manner in which they arrested the prisoner.³⁵

³³ Thursday, 15 October 1868, *New York Herald*, p. 6, col. 5.

³⁴ Thursday, 15 October 1868, *Utica Morning Herald and Daily Gazette*, p. 3, col. 4. This case is the same one which caused Abraham to wish to leave the United States for Brazil. Clearly, The General was apprehended and was placed on trial after his return from Brazil. See n. 3. Note that the victims' names do not match. In fact, it was Isaac Avery who was the victim in Poughkeepsie.

³⁵ Thursday, 15 October 1868 Poughkeepsie *Daily Eagle*, Vol. VIII, No. 2398, p. 3, col. 4.

Dishonest Abe, or Moral Indignation Due to Bribery (1865-1870)

The same newspaper, the next day offered additional details of the apprehension under the headline, “The Capture of Greenthall.—The capture of the man on Wednesday, by Officers Hamlin and Furman, was very cleverly done, and a few more particulars in regard to the affair may not prove uninteresting to our readers. Officer Hamlin first traced him by his large foot print, which could readily be distinguished from any other. On the way down the railroad track for some distance no trace of the prisoner could be found. At last the officers came upon a flagman, who told them that a man answering the description given had passed on and was then about half a mile further on. This encouraged them and they pushed rapidly on until they came upon a party of men to work, repairing the track. Greenthall could then be seen some distance ahead. Through the kindness of the foreman of the men the officers were provided with a hand car, manned by four stout men, which in an instant shot down the track with the speed of a locomotive. After passing a short distance from Greenthall the car was stopped very suddenly and the two officers jumped out and secured their prisoner before he had a chance to know what was up. He was hailing a sloop nearby at the time. He was searched to see if anything dangerous was about him, but nothing was found. The services of a farmer who lived nearby were then secured who brought the prisoner in a wagon to the Court House. If Greenthall had reached the depot at Milton in time to take the train down, which came along in a few minutes after he was taken, he would no doubt have succeeded in escaping. The arrest was very adroitly conducted on the part of the officers, and they deserve much credit for the same.³⁶

While the further details of The General’s capture might be interesting, unfortunately, the same newspaper does not complete the story by reporting the result of the trial so we do not know if Abraham was convicted or not. Given subsequent events, we can only assume that if he was convicted, he served a relatively short sentence, and if the trial was not pursued, we are left to wonder whether bribery in Poughkeepsie was again involved. Since the State of New York has no record of incarceration, it seems likely that The General was never convicted.

At this point, Abraham became a kind of standard of evil in a letter to an editor. *City Intelligence*—General Abraham Greenthall, formerly of New York City, and now of Poughkeepsie, held up as a standard of lack of integrity [in a political dispute].³⁷

³⁶ Friday, 16 October 1868, Vol. VIII, No. 2399, p. 3, col. 2.

³⁷ Saturday, 31 October 1868, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 4, col. 4.

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At some time after mid-October 1868, The General sailed for Europe, perhaps until things cooled down, returning on the Steamer Rhein, which landed in New York City on 17 July 1869,³⁸ having sailed from Bremen on Saturday, 3 July and from Southampton on Tuesday, 6 July.³⁹ We can speculate that Abraham was fleeing from the trial in Poughkeepsie. Unfortunately, the United States did not keep records of departures, and there are no known records of arrivals in Germany for that period. So we do not know why the General left for Europe or where he went. It is safe to presume, however, that The General, an American citizen with extensive American gang connections, intended to return to the United States. In any case The General's passage on the Steamer Rhein gave birth to a new scheme, one of arrest of a fellow criminal of German origin, whom The General seemed to befriend on board the Steamer. Just as in the case of the Hoboken thefts, The General made significant errors in judgment, as we shall see, and ultimately it cost him his liberty.

Those events were in the future, and there was another event which made the headlines before that. Soon after his return to the New York City area, the newspapers were full of accounts of Abraham's latest crime, the burglary of the store belonging to Messrs. Barton, Alexander & Waller, 68 Beekman Street, New York City. Abraham himself only mentions the crime briefly in *The Sun* article.

Abraham relates in the article that on the night of [Tuesday,] 17 August 1869 he burglarized Barton, Alexander & Walker, 68 Beekman Street, removing 138 dozen pocket knives, which he shipped to Baltimore. His wife sold them to one Kellar. A portion of the knives was recovered, but Greenthal escaped punishment. Abraham and his family were then living at 12 Norfolk Street prior to his arrest on Sunday, 24 October 1869.⁴⁰ Many influential detectives and others visited. Immediately after his release he moved to 97 Forsyth Street, where he still resided when the *Sun* article was published on 7 October 1871. It is interesting to note that the arrest occurred almost exactly two months after the crime occurred.

³⁸ The 17 July 1869 manifest for the Str. Rhein out of Bremen under F. C. Meyer, Master, shows no person named Greenthal aboard. However, Edward and Otto Lorenz, ages 42 and 17, respectively, and Caspar Paris, age 47, are listed. The person above Paris is Gerhd. Lion, age 48. All of these men are listed as merchants from Germany, going to the United States. Lion could be an alias for The General.

³⁹ Saturday, 18 July 1869, *New York Times*, Vol. XVIII, No. 5550, p. 1, col. 4. The General may have purposely avoided Hamburg to escape the notice of the Prussian police authorities because he was an escaped convict. See Chapter 1, n. 30.

⁴⁰ The *New York Daily Tribune*, below, indicates the arrest was one day later than the date indicated in the *New York Herald*.

Dishonest Abe, or Moral Indignation Due to Bribery (1865-1870)

As related in the *New York Herald*, Burglary in Beekman Street. The store of Messrs. Barlow, Alexander & Waller, dealers in cutlery and furs, at No. 68 Beekman street, was entered by burglars, who carried off 143 dozen of pocket knives, valued at \$400. Detective Tilley, of the Central Department, had charge of the case, but no trace of the thieves or property was obtained until about two weeks ago. Mr. Waller, being in Baltimore, identified some eighteen knives in a store in that city. He communicated with Chief Crone, of the Baltimore Police, and, obtaining search warrants, succeeded in overhauling several hardware stores, which resulted in recovering ninety dozen of the stolen knives. The proprietor of one of the stores searched stated that he had purchased the property from the well known Abram Greenthal, alias "the General," who, in company with his wife, brought the goods to his store in a trunk. Greenthal was arrested yesterday afternoon at his residence, No. 12 Norfolk Street, and is locked up at Police Headquarters for examination.⁴¹

The theft [from Messrs. Barton, Alexander & Waller, 68 Beekman Street] occurred in New York City on 17 August of knives, later sold below market price. Knives found in Baltimore and stolen by Abraham Greenthal. He and his wife had them in a trunk and sold them in Baltimore. He was arrested at 14 Norfolk Street, New York City, on Saturday, 23 October 1869, and locked up at Police Headquarters. He was to be taken before Justice Dowling at the Tombs [Police Court] on 25 October [and committed to await examination on a charge of having stolen \$1,400 worth of cutlery]. He had already served prison terms in Sing Sing, Trenton, and Philadelphia State Prisons.⁴²

The proceedings unfolded, as reported in the *New York Herald*. The Burglary in Beekman Street.—Abraham Granthall, better known as "The General," particulars of whose apprehension for a burglary in Beekman Street appeared in the *Herald* yesterday, was brought before Judge [Edward]⁴³ Hogan yesterday. Part of the stolen property (from Baltimore) was produced, and the evidence of the finding of the property taken. Only evidence sufficient for a remand was given, and the further examination was adjourned to Friday week. The prisoner was liberated on bail.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Monday, 25 October 1869, p. 10, col. 2. The name of the victim and the total amount of goods stolen also varies in various accounts of the crime. For example, in "Arrest of a Burglar," Monday, 25 October 1869, *Daily Evening Traveller*, Boston, MA, Vol. XXV, No. 176, p. 2, col. 5, the entry reads in full, "New York, Oct 25.—Abram Greenthal has been arrested for burglary and the robbing of Wilber's cutlery store, last August of fifteen hundred dollars worth of pocket knives."

⁴² Monday, 25 October 1869, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 5, col. 2. There is no evidence that Greenthal was ever sent to any prison in Pennsylvania.

⁴³ See p. 197 of New York Common Council, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York. ... 1870*, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?u=1&num=/197&seq=9&view=image&size=100&id=mdp.39015068435505/>.

⁴⁴ Tuesday, 26 October 1869, p. 5, col. 2.

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The *New York Tribune*, in reporting the case the same day, makes no mention of bail. At the Tombs Police Court yesterday, before Justice Dowling, was brought Abraham Greenthal, arrested on a charge of having stolen \$1,400 worth of cutlery from the store of Messrs. Barton, Alexander & Waller. He was committed to await an examination.⁴⁵

The case was sufficiently notorious that even a Massachusetts newspaper picked the story up and raised the value of the property stolen. Reported in New York City on Monday, 25 October: Abram Greenthal was arrested for burglariously entering Miller's cutlery store, last August, and taking \$1500 worth of pocket knives. The newspaper does not explain how it concluded that Miller owned the store.⁴⁶ The *Providence Evening Journal* identified the store as being Willer's cutlery store having been burglarized the previous evening and the value of the pocket knives as \$15,000, a considerable sum at that time.⁴⁷

In April 1870 we find Abraham's brother arrested for working an old scam that Abraham had perfected in Europe. He stole railway tickets from immigrant passengers. "Bogus Conductors:" On New York Central and Hudson Railroad Company at 30th Street, last Wednesday night. Herman Greenthal, *alias* Brown, shouted "Tickets" and 2 immigrant passengers who had tickets for St. Albans produced them. Herman was immediately arrested when he dropped the tickets on the floor of the car and offered the officer \$25 to let him go. He was arraigned before Justice Shandley⁴⁸ at Jefferson Market on Thursday morning and committed in default of \$500 bail to answer a charge of petty larceny at the Special Sessions.⁴⁹ Abraham may not have committed the crime, but it was he who surely planned the *modus operandi* carried out by his brother.

According to *The Sun* article, about October 1870 Abraham robbed a bank messenger of \$1,000 in gold certificates and shortly afterward robbed another man of \$2,350 in greenbacks. In the October 1871 interview which resulted in the *Sun* article, Abraham claimed that he was never arrested for these crimes.

⁴⁵ Tuesday, 26 October 1869, Criminal, p. 2, col. 4.

⁴⁶ Tuesday, 26 October 1869, *Springfield [MA] Daily Republican*, Vol. 26, No. 253, Whole Number. 7832, p. 2, col. 6.

⁴⁷ Monday, 25 October 1869, Providence, RI, Vol. XXII, No. 36, p. 3, col. 3.

⁴⁸ See p. 197 of New York Common Council, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York*,...1870 at <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?u=1&num=197&seq=9&view=image&size=100&id=mdp.39015068435505&q1=Shandley/>.

⁴⁹ Friday, 22 April 1870, *New York Herald*, Vol. XXXV, Issue 112, p. 5, col. 5.

Chapter 4 The Chief of the Light Fingered Artillery (1870-1871)

In 1870 according to the New York City Directory, Abram Greenthal lived at 52 Ludlow Street, between Grand and Hester Streets, and was a peddler. The Federal Census for New York, First Enumeration, 1870, finds Abraham and his family in New York City.¹ Caspar Paris, enumerated as living with the Greenthals, was a longtime employee who worked for Greenthal when he lived in West Hoboken, New Jersey, as discussed in Chapter 2. Due to “curbstoning,”² there was a second enumeration for the 1870 census in New York City and in four other cities. In that enumeration, Abraham and his family were enumerated again, as living at 50 Ludlow Street, between Hester and Grand Streets, New York City.³ That area is in the “Lower East Side” of the city.

According to *The Sun* article, first mentioned in Chapter 1, by 1871 Abraham had indictments pending against him in Xenia, OH, Harrisburg, PA, Poughkeepsie, NY, Erie, PA, Syracuse, NY, Suspension Bridge, NY, Hornellsville, NY, Providence, RI, and several in New York City.

The first we hear of a problem that the General had with a prisoner named Edward Lawrence is a complaint in a lawsuit filed by Lawrence and dated 13 April 1870. In the complaint Lawrence alleges that Greenthal caused his arrest by two policemen on board the Steamer Rhein from Bremen after it docked at Sandy Hook, New York, on 17 July 1869. Lawrence alleges that the arrest was Greenthal’s scheme to extort money from him. Greenthal allegedly told Lawrence that the former would have to bribe 3 judges with \$500 each to obtain Lawrence’s release from the city jail. Lawrence’s son, Otto Lawrence, filed an affidavit in the case as did various parties on Greenthal’s behalf, including a New York City policeman, a notary, a translator, and another witness. The police detective who instigated the arrest had since died. Lawrence was imprisoned in police headquarters for seven days until released on a writ of *habeas corpus* by Justice Albert Cardozo of the Supreme Court in 1869. The file also notes an affidavit of arrest that was issued on Thursday, 21 April 1870, and includes the 30 June 1870 petition for *habeas corpus* filed for Greenthal, indicating that he had been held in the city jail since 27 June 1870 in lieu of \$5,000 bail. Greenthal alleged that he had

¹ Ward 10, 7th Election District, 8 July 1870, stamped 284. Retrieved from <http://www.ancestry.com/>. Abraham and Hannah born in Prussia, all children born in New York City; Abraham Greenthal, peddler, age 40, citizen of the United States; Hannah, age 39; Malvina, age 19; Rachel, age 16; Frances, age 15; Mary, age 9.

² The illegal practice, used by some census takers, who stood on the curb to count the number of windows in a tenement, making up names in an amount estimated to be in each residential unit.

³ Ward 10, 5th Enumeration District, January 1871, stamped 176. Retrieved from <http://www.ancestry.com/>. Abraham and Hannah born in Prussia, all children born in New York City; Abe Greenthal [*sic*], age 40, pedler [*sic*]; Hannah, age 39; Molly, age 19; Ray, age 6; Fanny, age 15; Mary, age 9. Caspar Parris [*sic*] is again enumerated with the family.

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already obtained a release dated 29 June 1870 from Lawrence in the case and thus should have been freed but that the Sheriff had refused to accept the order. Lawrence had alleged that he did not understand what he was signing and had been duped because he did not fully understand English. However, a translator swore that he had accurately translated the entire conversation. The petition was heard by Justice Albert Cardozo of the New York Supreme Court in Manhattan on 30 June 1870. On 18 February 1871 The General was in jail as a result of allegations in the Lawrence case and sought his release on a motion to vacate the order of arrest. Justice George G. Barnard did vacate the order of arrest on 28 February 1871.

In the lawsuit Lawrence alleges that Greenthal cheated him out of \$2,950 to fix a case. Lawrence met Greenthal on board the Steamer Rhein, which docked in New York City on Saturday, 17 July 1869.⁴

In June 1870 Mr. G. S. Brandes, appearing before Justice Ledwith at the Essex Market Police Court, said that he saw Abraham Greenthal, Isaac Lorenz, Levi Leviticus, and another as he [Brandes] was walking along East Broadway at the corner of Rutgers Street. He saw Greenthal assault Lorenz, who appeared to be a foreigner. Brandes intervened at the request of Lorenz. Brandes proceeded onto Essex Street, where he met Officer 1,262, to whom he related the assault and asked him to arrest Greenthal. When Greenthal heard this, he renewed his assault on Lorenz and attacked Brandes. The officer refused to interfere because he said that Leviticus was a Deputy Sheriff, and Greenthal was in his custody. Brandes then followed them to Ludlow Street jail, where he was refused admittance. Justice Ledwith thought the matter too trivial an offense to issue a warrant, preferring to leave the matter to the disposition of the civil authorities.⁵

The newspapers also reported the details of the lawsuit. The General had submitted an affidavit to the court in Manhattan in which he alleged that the Sheriff arrested him on \$5,000 bail on 27 June 1870 and that the action was already settled but that the Sheriff refused to accept the order of release.

⁴ Affidavit of arrest in the case of Edward Lawrence v. Abraham Greenthal, Thursday, 21 April 1870, in the records of the New York County Clerk, WR-G1606 and WR-G1607. See http://www.courts.state.ny.us/supctmanh/county_clerk_records.htm/ and Luft, Edward David, and Abrams, Bruce, "Three Manhattan Databases: Using Newspapers to Find Bankruptcy Cases Leading to Court Cases," *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, Bergenfield, NJ, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, Winter 2007, pp. 17-19.

⁵ Wednesday, 29 June 1870, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 2, col. 4.

The Chief of the Light Fingred Artillery (1870-1871)

The specific cause of action which had been settled was not revealed but almost certainly was the Lawrence case.⁶

In mid-February 1871, Abraham's attorney tried to obtain his freedom by a different method. He moved in court for an order to show cause why an order of arrest against the defendant should not be vacated. Motion denied. Allegedly, Greenthal told Lawrence to pay him money to bribe the judges with \$1,500, presumably \$500 each. Lawrence paid and sued to have the money returned when he found out that the judges were not paid.⁷

The matter received fuller treatment in another newspaper and, as a result, we know why the motion was denied. Edward Lawrence had arrived recently in this country, and being possessed of considerable money he was arrested, it is alleged, on a trumped up charge and lodged in jail. Of course he was anxious to secure his freedom and release from the accusation preferred against him. A man named Abraham Greenthal, who is said to have been one of the parties instrumental in his arrest, called on the incarcerated and frightened emigrant at his quarters in Ludlow Street jail, and told him the grand open sesame was money. Mr. Lawrence, as he avers, gave Greenthal a draft on Wall Street for \$5,000, and the result was an order for his release and repayment to him of \$1,300. "What did you pay the rest of the money for?" asked Mr. Lawrence.

"I paid \$500 each to Judges Barnard, Cardozo,⁸ and Sutherland,⁹ making \$1,500; I have retained \$2,300 for my own services, and the remainder have given to you."

"It is alright, I suppose," said Mr. Lawrence.

"All right," answered Mr. Greenthal.

Subsequently, Mr. Lawrence discovered, so he alleges, that he had been the victim of a vile fraud, and applied for an order of arrest against Greenthal from Judge Barnard, sitting in Supreme Court Chambers. The application was made on Friday. The order was promptly granted, and the Judge in granting it took occasion to pronounce a scathing diatribe upon broken down lawyers of unscrupulous proclivities in their claims of bribing judges, and said such charges did not weigh a

⁶ The affidavit is interesting because it contains the original Hebrew signature of Abraham Greenthal. He usually signed affidavits with three letters "x" or some variation thereof. Thursday, 30 June 1870 Application for writ of *habeas corpus*, First Judicial District of New York, taken from the records of the New York County Clerk. See note 4 and http://www.courts.state.ny.us/supctmanh/county_clerk_records.htm.

⁷ Sunday, 12 February 1871 *New York Times*, p. 6, col. 4. Lawrence v. Grenthal, Supreme Court, 10 February.

⁸ Albert Cardozo. See <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1051635/>.

⁹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josiah_Sutherland/. and <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=S001084>

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feather's weight against him. In giving the order he also expressed the belief that he had once sent Greenthal to Sing Sing as a receiver of stolen goods.¹⁰ The matter came up again yesterday on an application to show cause why Greenthal, who meantime had been committed to Ludlow Street jail, should not be discharged.

"I decline to give the order," promptly spoke up the judge.

"On what grounds?" asked Greenthal's lawyer.

"On what I deem good and sufficient grounds," answered the Judge. "A man who has paid \$1,500 to the judges can get out now without further pay," said the Judge. "Judge Sutherland was holding Oyer and Terminer and might issue a writ of habeas corpus."

"Do you hold him on general principles?" asked the counsel.

"I don't mean it on general principles," replied the judge. "I mean it for going around and lying about the Supreme Court Judges. It will teach him to keep a civil tongue in his head. The judges he has defamed are strangers to him except myself, and I think I have seen him twice—once when I was Recorder and once while I sat in Oyer and Terminer. Three-fourths of the bar, when they are beaten, lay it on the judges, and when they collect any money tell their clients they have paid it over to the judges. The District Attorney told me on Friday that such statements were continually made by lawyers about him. The defendant must take the usual notice of ten days unless you get the plaintiff's counsel to withdraw."¹¹

The case was sufficiently novel from the point of view of various newspapers that at least two more newspapers reported the story on the same day. The *Sunday Mercury* reported on Greenthal for the first time.

Edward Lawrence recently arrived in this country with a large sum of money. He was arrested on a trumped up charge and confined to Ludlow Street jail. Abraham Greenthal is allegedly one of the persons who caused his arrest and visited Lawrence in jail, telling him that money was the only thing

¹⁰ See Chapter 3, n. 32.

¹¹ Sunday, 12 February 1871, *New York Herald*, p. 5, col. 6. The headline reads. "Judge Barnard Indignant. How Unsuspecting Men are Victimized by Sharpers—A Charge of Judicial Bribery and How It Is Met. Ways that are dark and tricks that are vain." A slightly briefer version to the same effect appeared in *The Evening Post*, New York, Vol. 70, Saturday, 11 February 1871, p. 4, col.7. Reprinted in full, Saturday, 18 February 1871, *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, Vol. XXXV, No. 43, p. 3, col. 5; and the story ran in the Monday, 13 February 1871 *Boston Herald*, p. 4, col. 7. Judge Barnard was reported in the Saturday, 11 February 1871 *New York Sun*, Vol. 38, p. 1, col. 5 to have railed against the *New York Times*, stating that the editor beat his wife in private and abused Judge Barnard in public. The *Sun* article does not record the judge's ruling on the application to free Greenthal. The May, 13 February 1871 *Troy Daily Whig*, p. 2, col. 2, took a dim view of *The Sun's* reporting and of Judge Barnard.

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that could secure his release. Lawrence alleges that he gave Greenthal a draft on Wall Street for \$5,000, resulting in an order for Lawrence's release and repayment to him of \$1,200. Greenthal informed him that he had paid \$500 each to Judges Barnard, Cardozo, and Sutherland and had retained \$2,300 as his fee. Through his counsel, Lawrence then applied for an order of arrest of Greenthal, the order being granted by Judge Barnard. Barnard also stated that he believed that he had sent Greenthal to prison as a receiver of stolen goods. Greenthal was arrested on late Friday evening and sent to Ludlow Street jail. Greenthal then on Saturday, 11 February, sought an order on short notice to show cause why he should not be released. Judge Barnard declined. He believed that he had seen Greenthal only twice, once when he sat in Oyer and Terminer and once when he was Recorder. The other two judges are strangers to Greenthal. Barnard ordered that Greenthal take the usual 10-day notice unless plaintiff's counsel withdraw the motion.¹²

Another paper was more acerbic. "In the case of Edward Lawrence against Abraham Greenthal, an order of arrest was granted against the defendant, upon the affidavit of Lawrence that Greenthal had obtained \$2,800 from him on false pretenses. Lawrence, an emigrant, was put in jail upon a trumped up charge on his arrival in this country, and Greenthal told him that \$1,500 would be divided among Judges Sutherland, Cardozo, and Barnard to obtain his release. Greenthal was arrested on Lawrence's complaint, and on motion before Judge Barnard last Saturday to vacate the order of arrest, Barnard refused to give the order, saying he would prefer that Greenthal rot in jail. Barnard said that the other judges were strangers to Greenthal, but that he, Barnard,¹³ had met Greenthal as Recorder and once in Oyer and Terminer. Barnard stated that between the detective officer and Greenthal, Lawrence was robbed of \$3,000. If Greenthal possesses so much influence to get people out of jail, he should get out himself."¹⁴

The facts of the case were noted across the East River, in both directions. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported: "Libeling a Court: The Man Who Talked of Bribing the Judges—Judge Barnard Holds Him in Prison for Lying. Judge Barnard believed that Greenthal was the man he sent to Sing Sing when Barnard was Recorder. Barnard also had Greenthal before him when Barnard sat in Oyer and Terminer. Defendant can seek an order on the usual 10 days' notice unless the counsel for plaintiff will withdraw."¹⁵

¹² Sunday, 12 February 1871, *Sunday Mercury* [listed under *Morning Telegraph*], New York, Vol. XXXIII, No. 7, p. 4, col. 4, under the headline, "Greenthal Sent to Ludlow Street Jail."

¹³ See Chapter 3, n. 35.

¹⁴ Monday, 13 February 1871, *New York Daily Tribune*, Vol. XXX, No. 9,315, p. 2, col. 6.

¹⁵ Monday, 13 February 1871, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Vol. 31, No. 36, p. 4, col. 4.

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A Trenton, New Jersey newspaper gloated over how much more honest New Jersey judges were in a headline, “The Soiled Ermine.” From a report in *The Sun*, Judge George G. Barnard in General Term of the New York Supreme Court, when a lawyer called for an order of arrest for “General Greenthal,” Barnard stated that he had already sent him twice to State Prison as a receiver of stolen goods. He was accused of swindling a man in prison out of \$3,000, telling the man that \$1,500 was for 3 judges.¹⁶

Both sides made depositions.¹⁷ The outcome of the day was that the motion to discharge from arrest or admit to bail was postponed to the following Monday, when it was to come up in Supreme Court Chambers. The facts of the case were recited, including that \$1,500 was to be used to bribe Judges Ingraham, Barnard, and Cardozo, of the Supreme Court. The plaintiff Lawrence claimed that Greenthal’s allegation that he bribed the judges was false, and the money was thus obtained from Lawrence under false pretenses and that Lawrence then procured Greenthal’s arrest under a civil warrant in an action to recover the money. The affidavits in opposition to Greenthal’s motion for discharge or ball will allege that Greenthal made the acquaintance of Lawrence on board a ship, that Greenthal had Lawrence arrested because the latter would not give him \$1,000, that Lawrence was placed in Ludlow Street Jail, and that while there Greenthal procured the money from him which he pretended to pay to the judges. Furthermore, the affidavits state that after obtaining the money and having Lawrence released, Greenthal advised Lawrence to leave the city to avoid a second arrest. Greenthal will also present affidavits, including one by himself, stating that Lawrence is a fugitive from justice in Prussia¹⁸ and that this matter was already settled for \$1,000. Lawrence will represent in an affidavit that the settlement was made as a result of Greenthal’s misrepresentations, and that there was an attempt at subornation of perjury on Greenthal’s part.

The *New York Herald* summarized the case. “Charges of Judicial Bribery. Edward Lawrence, agent, against Abraham Greenthal. In the case of Edward Lawrence against Abraham Greenthal, Mr. Lawrence alleges in affidavits¹⁹ that in coming to the United States from Prussia, he encountered

¹⁶ Saturday, 18 February 1871, *Daily State Gazette*, Trenton, NJ, Vol. XXV, Issue 42, p. 2.

¹⁷ Reported in the *New York Times*, “The Greenthal Bribery Case,” Friday, 24 February 1871, p. 2, col. 6.

¹⁸ It is to be remembered that Greenthal was himself a fugitive from justice in Prussia, having escaped on his way to prison.

¹⁹ The New York County Clerk’s Office holds a considerable number of affidavits filed in the case of Edward Lawrence agt. Abraham Greenthal. See http://www.courts.state.ny.us/suptctmanh/county_clerk_records.htm/ and Luft, Edward David, and Abrams, Bruce, “Three Manhattan Databases: Using Newspapers to Find Bankruptcy Cases Leading

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Abraham Greenthal on the ship. Upon his arrival here a little more than a year ago, Greenthal, before the ship reached the dock, had a talk with certain persons, and when they landed Greenthal kept close to Lawrence and said that these persons were detective officers to arrest Lawrence, but that if Lawrence would give Greenthal \$1,000 for them, he would not be arrested. Lawrence refused, was arrested, and taken to Ludlow Street jail. There Greenthal came to him and told him that he could not get out for \$1,000 but that for \$500 more, to be paid to each of three judges, one of them Judge Cardozo, he could get out. Lawrence agreed to pay the money, was taken to court, and discharged. Greenthal told Lawrence that he had paid \$500 to each of 3 Supreme Court judges to give the order that Lawrence be discharged. One judge allegedly said that Lawrence should leave the city to avoid further arrest. Greenthal alleges that Lawrence was a fugitive from justice from Prussia and arrested on that account., and that Lawrence brought suit against him for this same cause of action and settled it for \$1,000. Lawrence avers that the suit settled was for a different cause of action and was settled because Judge Russell, the attorney in the case, was dead. He says that Greenthal is a convicted felon and not to be believed. Further, the paper signed by Lawrence to settle the earlier case was really obtained by a misrepresentation of the contents. In this connection, he offers an affidavit by Louis Blumenthal, who alleges an attempt at subornation of perjury in this case against Lawrence, which Blumenthal refused to participate in. Blumenthal's affidavit is dated Monday, 20 February 1871, and alleges that the subornation occurred the previous Saturday, 18 February. The case will come up before Judge Barnard on Monday, 26 February 1871."²⁰

At the end of February 1871, an order for the arrest of Abraham Greenthal was vacated in the case of Edward Lawrence vs. Abraham Greenthal.²¹ The case unfolded in the Supreme Court Chambers—Blind Justice Supreme to All Personal Considerations. Before Judge Barnard. Lawrence vs. Greenthal.—The particulars of this case have been too frequently given to require repetition. The plaintiff alleges that the defendant caused his incarceration in Ludlow street jail on a trumped up charge, and then pretended to have secured his release through paying \$1,500 to Judges Ingraham, Barnard and Cardozo, which sum, with \$2,300 additional for his services, the plaintiff claims to have paid to defendant. Ascertaining that the money, as he alleges, had been fraudulently obtained, the plaintiff secured the arrest of the defendant and his consignment to Ludlow street jail. On the motion coming up to vacate the latter order of arrest, it will be remembered that the Judge passed some scathing strictures upon the defendant's pretended bribing of the judges. The Judge gave his decision to-day, which, it will be seen, notwithstanding the facts stated, discharges the accused. The following is THE OPINION:

to Court Cases," *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, Bergenfield, NJ, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, Winter 2007, pp. 17-19.

²⁰ Friday, 24 February 1871, *New York Daily Tribune*, Vol. XXX, No 9,325, p. 2, col. 5.

²¹ Tuesday, 28 February 1871 Special Term of Supreme Court of the State of New York.

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I think there can be no doubt that the defendant and others have cheated the plaintiff out of his money. Plaintiff, however, has taken defendant's and his wife's notes without any inducements being held out to him or false representations made, he gave a general release of all claims and demands to him and consented to his discharge from imprisonment. The settlement was made by and with the knowledge and consent of plaintiff's then counsel. He is discharged.²²

In 1871 according to *Trow's New York City Directory*, Abram Greenthal lived at 112 Rivington Street, between Essex and Ludlow Streets, and was a peddler.

However, knowing his way around the Jersey City area, Abraham plied his trade there. "The Jersey City Police Taking Care of New York Thieves. There was a burglary in Jersey City a few nights ago within 200 feet of police headquarters. Greenthal visited Jersey City yesterday in company with a female, called into a dry goods store which was robbed a few nights ago. Chief of Police McWilliams spotted Greenthal. He was then locked up in the City Prison. Greenthal asked what the charge was and was told that they would talk about that later. In New Jersey suspicious characters can be arrested and held in prison."²³

Perhaps it was the *New York Herald* article which moved The General to take action against a newspaper. General Greenthal, the celebrated chief of the thieves, came to Judge Hogan to ask for a warrant against a newspaper that had libeled him.

"What did they do?" said the Judge.

"Published a libel about me."

"About you?"

"Yes, your Honor."

"Why, they couldn't libel you."

"Yes, but they did, though."

"What did they say about you?"

"They called me a thief."

"Oh, that's no libel on you."

"You won't give me a warrant?"

"No, sir."²⁴

Abraham's next adventure was unfolding at just about the same time. As he related in *The Sun* article, "On 13 July [1871] he picked the pocket of Jacob Nettring of 119 Eighth Street. The amount was \$1,400, as the victim was leaving the Butchers' and Drovers' Bank, 124 Bowery. Two days

²² *New York Herald*, Wednesday, 1 March 1871, p. 5, col. 4.

²³ Thursday, 6 July 1871, *New York Herald*, p. 8, col. 5.

²⁴ Wednesday, 12 July 1871, *New York Herald*, p. 9, col. 2.

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later [15 July 1871] the General was arrested on a street car while trying to pick another man's pocket. Greenthal was locked up in the Eldridge Street Police Station and positively identified the next day by Mr. Nettring. He was committed by Alderman [Bernard] O'Neill,²⁵ sitting at Essex Market Police Court, with bail set at \$2,500 and later forfeited. He was rearrested on a bench warrant and last Thursday [5 October 1871] placed on trial. Mr. Nettring could not identify him at trial so the District Attorney abandoned the case. Apparently Assemblyman Cris Fleck²⁶ of Avenue B paid Nettring \$1,400."

The newspapers loved the story. A victim drew out money from the Butchers' and Drovers' National Bank. On leaving the premises, Abraham and Heyman Greenthal, jostled him, and he immediately missed his money. They were arrested and held to answer by Judge Ledwith.²⁷

Harris [*sic*, should be Abraham] Greenthal, *alias* "General" and Herman Greenthal, his brother, were arrested yesterday evening as they were about to start for Boston. They are charged with having stolen \$1,400 last Saturday afternoon from a house framer as he was leaving a bank at the corner of Grand Street and the Bowery. The Greenthals are locked up in the Eldridge Street Police Station.²⁸ Two well-known thieves, Harris Greenthal [*sic*, should be Abraham] *alias* "General," and his brother, Herman Greenthal, were arrested, last evening by officers King and Lyon, of the Tenth precinct, charged with stealing \$1,400 from Jacob Nettring, on Saturday afternoon, as he was leaving the Butchers' and Drovers' Bank, at Grand street and Bowery.²⁹

Apparently, Abraham was released because he was arrested the next evening in Jersey City.

²⁵ See p. 165 of New York Common Council, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York ... 1870*; <http://tiny.cc/8tk1rw/>.

²⁶ Flecke, Christopher—of New York, New York County, N.Y. Member of New York state assembly from New York County 10th District, 1871, 1877. See <http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/flanagin-fleishman.html/>. See "Seventeenth Ward International Democratic Association," *New York Herald*, Tuesday, 28 September 1869, p. 10, col. 3. Chris Flecke was City Marshal by Monday, 31 January 1870. See *New York Herald* of that date, p. 7, col. 6.

²⁷ Monday, 17 July 1871, *New York Times*, p. 8, col. 5. For Judge Thomas A. Ledwith, see p. 197 of Common Council, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York*, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?view=image;size=100;id=mdp.39015068435505;q1=Alderman%20O%27Neill;page=root;seq=223;num=197/>.

²⁸ Monday, 17 July 1871, *The New York Herald*, p. 5, col. 4

²⁹ Monday, 17 July 1871, *New York Evening Post*, Vol. 70, page 2, col. 6.

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“Abraham Greenthal, a notorious thief, was arrested in Jersey City late last evening by Detective Nugent and held for examination. He had in his possession a quantity of stolen cloth, a note for \$100, and \$81 in stamps.”³⁰

New Jersey tried out a new law allowing the detention of “suspicious characters” and a New Jersey judge eagerly applied the new law to The General.³¹

The same newspaper reported the same arrest as having occurred the next day in an article that appeared the following day. “Re-Arrest of “Gen.” Greenthal. Late last night Detective Nugent arrested “General” Abraham Greenthal, the noted receiver, at the Pavonia Ferry. This is Greenthal’s second arrest in this city within two weeks. He is supposed to be connected with the robbery of Brown’s dry goods store, some few weeks ago. A check for \$100 and \$81 in currency were found in his possession. He was locked up.”³² A journal in Wisconsin even carried the story.³³

³⁰ Tuesday, 18 July 1871, *New York Herald*, p. 10, col. 2. The story was picked up in upstate New York; Tuesday, 18 July 1871, *Buffalo Evening Courier & Republic*, Vol XI, No. 168, p. 2, col.5; see also Tuesday, 18 July 1871 *Jackson Daily Citizen*, Jackson, Michigan, Vol. VII, No. 98, p. 1, col. 2, “Arrest of a Notorious Thief;” and Tuesday, 18 July 1871 *Cincinnati Times and Chronicle*, Vol. LIII, No. 11,054, p. 1, col. 3.

³¹ Tuesday, 18 July 1871, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, Vol. V, No. 66, p. 1, col. 3. First District—Before Judge Seymour: Abraham Grunthall, suspicious character, held for examination.

³² Wednesday, 19 July 1871, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, Vol. V, No. 67, p. 4, col. 2.

³³ Wednesday, 19 July 1871, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Vol. XXVIII, Issue 168, p. 1, col. 5.

Chapter 5
The Greatest of the Pickpockets in the Tombs and State Prison (1871-1872)

In the Autumn of 1871 The General was scheduled for trial on a charge of grand larceny in the Jacob Nettring case.¹ The two charges were to be heard at the end of September, but the case was postponed, perhaps because the complaining witness was in Europe. The case was rescheduled for a week later,² but when Nettring again did not appear, the District Attorney's case collapsed although the District Attorney prepared to try The General on burglary charges.

The General, in the *Sun* interview, noted that he was acquitted in the Court of General Sessions that previous Thursday.³

The newspapers carried the following accounts.

“General” Greenthal. He is Discharged on one Charge, but to be Tried on Another for Burglary. Abram Greenthal, *alias* “General” Greenthal, was placed on trial in the Court of General Sessions, to-day, on a charge of stealing \$1,400 from Jacob Neefe, on the 8th of July, in front of the Butchers’ and Drovers’ Bank. Neefe testified that he was jostled by several men, among whom, apparently was Greenthal, and that he shortly afterwards missed his money. There was no proof, however, directly connecting Greenthal with the loss of the money, and the case broke down. Greenthal was discharged from the complaint, but is to be tried on another charge, of burglary.⁴

¹ Court of General Sessions, Judge [Gunning S.] Bedford[, Jr.]; No. 12—The People v. Abram Greenthal, grand larceny, two cases. Thursday, 28 September 1871, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 6. Court Calendars, This Day, Court of General Session, Judge Bedford, No. 12, Ab’m Greenthal, grand larceny. Thursday, 28 September 1871, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 3, col. 1. City Intelligence: The Trial of “General” Greenthal. The trial of the notorious “General” Greenthal was again deferred to-day. He is charged this time with stealing \$1,400 from a poor German. Thursday, 28 September 1871, *Commercial Advertiser*, p. 4, col. 5.

² Court of General Sessions, Hackett, Recorder, Court calendar for the day: Nos. 1 & 2 The People vs. Abram Greenthal, burglary and grand larceny. Thursday, 5 October 1871, *New York Times*, p. 3, col. 1. The Recorder was John K. Hackett; see New York Common Council, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York ... 1870*, *op. cit.*, p. 165; <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015068435505;view=image;seq=191;num=165;q1=Hackett;start=1;size=10;page=search/>.

³ *The Sun*, New York, *op. cit.*, Saturday, 7 October 1871.

⁴ Thursday, 5 October 1871, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 4, col. 6.

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In Superior Court—Circuit—Part I. Abram Greenthal, alias “General Greenthal,” was tried on a charge of stealing \$1,400 from Jacob Nething, a German, as the latter was leaving the vestibule of the Butchers and Drovers Bank on 8 July. The complainant believed that the prisoner was one of 4 men who shoved him as he was going out of the door. The police at Headquarters arrested Greenthal, well known to them. The evidence was too slight to warrant the jury convicting him. After the verdict of acquittal, Greenthal was remanded for trial upon a charge of burglary.⁵

As the *Sun* article states, The General was tried the previous Thursday for the following crime. General Abraham Greenthal has now been locked up in the Tombs and is to be tried on burglary charges for stealing knives on 17 August 1869. Mr. Waller, now in Europe, will doubtless be bribed to keep away from New York City. One of the General’s daughters stated last night that her father would surely be released on Monday [9 October 1871]. That depends upon District Attorney Garvin.

It was at this point that the General gave the interview on Friday, 6 October 1871, to the *Sun* reporter. The *Sun* interview appeared the next day. We do not know why the General chose to do the interview, but he would live to greatly regret his actions, as we shall see. Developments moved slowly but moved to an inexorable crescendo in 1876, as those reading further will discover.

The *Sun* interview adds some “human interest” elements to the reporting, stating, “The General has 3 daughters. They are skilled piano players and singers, good card players, and know a Heidseic from a Dry Verzenay, always receiving visitors with a smile.” It also adds, “Herman, alias Harris, Greenthal, lives at 53 Mott Street [in 1871]. He is less daring but well-known to the police.”

Abraham, using a new surname, managed to escape the notice of the newspapers for a month and a half⁶ but then was arrested for pickpocketing. We even know from *The Sun* how that came about.

Pickpockets. The Chief of the Detective police, having directed his officers to arrest all known pickpockets found “working the crowd,” the following arrests were made. Detective Officers

⁵ Friday, 6 October 1871, *New York Herald*, p. 8, col. 1.

⁶ Abraham Greenthal arrested at 14th Street and Broadway and taken to Police Headquarters where he gave his name as Abraham Woolf. Wednesday, 22 November 1871, *New York Tribune*, Vol. XXXI, No. 9,557, p. 1, col. 3. That same day, *The Evening Post*, New York, Vol. 70, reported under “City Intelligence” that “The detective police arrested several pick pockets yesterday in different parts of the city—among them the notorious General Abraham Greenthal, whom the police believed to be in a New Jersey state prison,” p. 3, col. 9.

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Heidelberg and Byrnes arrested General Abraham Greenthal (who was supposed to be in a New Jersey State prison), working in the crowd at the corner of Fourteenth Street and Broadway, and took him to Police Headquarters, where he gave the name of Abraham Wolfe.⁷

The General appears to have seen an arrest as merely a loss of work time because he was soon at work again. Greenthal, outside 39 John Street, pickpocketed a man and ran inside. Greenthal denied the charge. He was arrested and gave his name as Abram Myers. He was taken before Justice Hogan at Tombs Police Court and committed for examination on Monday morning.⁸

Another arrest soon followed:

City News—The Greatest of the Pickpockets in the Tombs.—Yesterday afternoon Officer Edward Ryan arrested Gen. Abraham Greenthal, the king of the pickpockets. Mr. Arthur C. Taylor, a clerk of the firm of Barnes, Curtis & Barnes, of 111 William St., on returning from the bank with \$250 was met by Greenthal in John Street. As they passed 39 John Street, Taylor found Greenthal crowding against him and in an instant his money vanished. He followed Greenthal into the store and demanded his money. Greenthal went to the rear and then returned to where Taylor was standing, denying that he had the money. Mr. Fould, the store owner, who had been watching him, saw him drop something on the floor. It was two money packages containing \$250. Taylor identified them as the ones taken from his pocket. At the Beekman Street police station the pickpocket identified himself as Abraham Myers. At the Tombs, Greenthal claimed that he did not take the money and was arrested because he had a bad name. He said that his friend, Jacob Meyers, lives in Jersey. When the Justice asked him to tell him Myers's address, the General said that he did not know. He was sent down to await examination on Monday.⁹

Even the Jersey City newspaper thought that its readers would be interested: “General Abraham Greenthal, king of the pickpockets, was locked up in the New York City Tombs on Saturday for

⁷ Wednesday, 22 November 1871, *The Sun*, New York, Vol. 39, p. 1, col. 2. “Reception of the Duke—Visit of Russian duke to New York City.

⁸ Sunday, 26 November 1871, *New York Times*, “Greenthal Caught,” p. 3, col. 3.

⁹ Sunday, 26 November 1871, *New York Sunday Mercury* [listed under *Morning Telegraph*], p. 5, col. 1.

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robbery of A[rthur] C. Taylor on John Street of \$250. Greenthal gave his name as Abraham Myers and protested his innocence, saying that he was only arrested because he had a bad name. The money was recovered.”¹⁰ Other newspapers also picked up the same story.¹¹

The *New York Times* continued the story the next day: The notorious outlaw, “General” Greenthal, was yesterday before Justice Hogan, at the Tombs Police Court, for examination on the charge of picking the pocket of Arthur C. Taylor, of No. 111 William-street, on Saturday last. There being no additional evidence, the prisoner was committed, in default of \$5,000 bail, and the papers were sent at once to the District-Attorney, with a view to the speedy indictment and trial of the accused.¹²

There is a minor discrepancy as to when The General was indicted. The *New York Evening Telegram* claimed that it was on 25 November,¹³ but the actual indictment on file in the New York City Municipal Archives shows that the indictment was dated 28 November.¹⁴ In any event, Greenthal was arraigned on Tuesday, 28 November, on a charge of robbery, and pleading not guilty, was remanded for trial on Wednesday, 29 November.

When the General’s case was set to be tried in the Court of General Sessions on the morning of 29 November, his counsel read an affidavit, stating that the defendant was innocent, and that a vendor, [Isaac Morris], in whose company he was and who can prove his innocence, left the day of the arrest for Ohio. Assistant District Attorney Fellows¹⁵ opposed any postponement, believing that the application addressed itself to the ... discretion of the court; the claim was that prejudice existed against the prisoner simply because he was one of the noted criminals of the city. Mr. Fellows did not believe that the affidavit was true, but he did believe that Greenthal could procure a dozen men

¹⁰ Monday, 27 November 1871, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, p. 2, col. 4.

¹¹ Monday, 27 November 1871, *Springfield Daily Republican*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Vol. 28, No 283, p. 5, col. 3. Monday, 27 November 1871, *Boston Daily Journal*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 12,898, p. 4, col. 5, Olla Podrida. Monday, 27 November 1871, *Bangor Daily Whig & Courier*, Issue 282, col. 1. [Library of Congress Microfilm 1175].

¹² Tuesday, 28 November 1871, p. 2, col. 3.

¹³ Tuesday, 28 November 1871, *New York Evening Telegram*, p. 1, col. 6.

¹⁴ New York City Municipal Archives, microfilm reel MN#1510.

¹⁵ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_R._Fellows

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to swear to whatever he might wish. The Judge consented to put the case over until Monday.¹⁶ The calendar of the Court of General Sessions for Monday, 4 December 1871, includes the case of Abraham Greenthal, grand larceny.¹⁷

So the case was tried in the Court of General Sessions on the first Monday in December 1871. Abraham Green, *alias* Abraham Greenthal, was convicted by the jury. The judge stated that it was a matter of official satisfaction to him to at last have an opportunity of meting out justice to so notorious an offender against the laws of God and man as he was. He was one of the most skillful thieves that ever disgraced this or any other country, and to rid society of such a dangerous and degraded criminal, he would send him to the State Prison for five years, the highest penalty allowed by statute.¹⁸

The *New York Herald* reported the matter in great detail, as usual, and a bit differently, under the headline, "Court of General Sessions. 'General' Greenthal Caged at Last—The Chief of the Light-Fingered Artillery Sent to the State Prison for Five Years. Before Judge Bedford." The notorious Abraham Green, *alias* "General" Greenthal, was placed at the bar upon an indictment charging him with stealing \$250 from the person of Arthur C. Taylor. The accused is an old man, and enjoys the unenviable reputation of being the most skillful pickpocket in the country. Before the examination of the witnesses commenced the "General's" legal adviser interposed numerous technical points of law, claiming that the Court had no jurisdiction, inasmuch as that was not the November but the December term.

His Honor overruled the objection, stating that he discharged the jurors till the 1st inst., which would be the commencement of the December term.

The Testimony.

Arthur C. Taylor was then sworn, and testified that he was in the employ of A. S. Barnes & Co., corner of John and William Streets; that on the 25th of November he received four packages of bills at the bank, amounting to \$250; that while opposite the store of Robert Foulds. In John Street, about half-past eleven o'clock in the morning, the prisoner came up to him and pushed against his pocket; he felt a tug, and immediately, discovered that the money was gone; the prisoner went into Mr. Foulds' store, and two packages of the money, amounting to \$150, were found lying on the counter where the accused was standing; there was no person except Greenthal near the complainant when

¹⁶ Thursday, 30 November 1871, Poughkeepsie *Daily Eagle*, p. 2, col. 4. "General" Greenthal's Case, New York, Nov. 29. The story was also reported in the Thursday, 30 November 1871 New York Times, Vol. XXI, No. 5301, p. 8, col. 3, without mentioning the Assistant District Attorney; and in the Wednesday, 29 November 1871 *Evening Post*, New York, Vol. 70, p. 4, col. 2, spelling the name of the Assistant District Attorney as "Fellowes."

¹⁷ Saturday, 2 December 1871, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 5, col. 4.

¹⁸ Monday, 4 December 1871, *New York Evening Telegram*, p. 4, col. 4.

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the money was taken; when Mr. Taylor accused the prisoner of picking his pocket, he replied, “Oh, no, I would not take your money; I came from across the street, and had nothing to do with it.”

Mr. Howe declined to cross-examine the witness on the ground that the accused was entitled to have a jury selected from the panel summoned to serve during the December term.

Robert Foulds, the proprietor of the store, 39 John Street, was sworn, and said that on the day in question his attention was called to the front part of the store by loud talking, Mr. Taylor having accused the prisoner of taking the money; the witness walked forward, and the prisoner said he was a customer, which was not true, Mr. Foulds never having seen him before; it was proposed to send for Mr. Barnes, whereupon the prisoner became very restless, and wanted to go through the store; the attention of the witness was called to the rear of the store, and upon returning he saw the prisoner shuffling boxes on the counter, behind which he had concealed two packages of the money, which were identified by Mr. Taylor as part of the proceeds of the larceny.

Officer Ryan was called in and took the General into custody.

Judge Bedford briefly charged the jury, and as there was no defense upon the facts, they rendered a verdict of guilty without leaving their seats.

Mr. Howe moved an arrest of judgment, which was overruled, and the prisoner was arraigned for sentence, who in response to the Judge’s inquiry, said he served a term of three years in a State Prison about twelve years ago.

The sentence.

Judge Bedford said—Greenthal, you are one of the most notorious and skillful pickpockets in this country or any other, and it is an official gratification for me to know at least a man who has so openly defied all law as you have during the last twenty years is now within the grasp of the law. For the future protection of society I shall sentence you to the State Prison for five years, the full limit prescribed by statute.¹⁹

The report in the *New York Times* was more perfunctory. “In the Court of General Sessions yesterday, Judge Bedford sentenced Abraham Green, *alias* General Greenthal, for robbery of Arthur C. Taylor of \$250. Green was sentenced to five years in State Prison.”²⁰

The General arrived in Sing Sing, Ossining, New York, on the same day that he was convicted. The Inmate Admission Register notes that Abraham Green, alias Abraham Greenthal, age 54, was born in Germany, wife is Hannah. He lives at 167 Mott Street, New York City, where he lived at the time of his arrest. He is 5' 8¼" 198 lbs. Florid complexion. Black hair, hazel eyes. Can read and write.

¹⁹ Tuesday, 5 December 1871, p. 10, cols. 2-3.

²⁰ Tuesday, 5 December 1871, *New York Times*, p. 8, col. 4. A Similar report appeared in the Monday, 5 December 1871, *Troy Daily Whig*, Troy, NY, Vol. XXXIX, No. 224, p. 3, col. 7; and in the Thursday, 7 December 1871, *Independent Statesman*, Concord, NH, Vol. 1, No. 10, p. 76, col. 4.

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Temperate [non-alcoholic]. Jew. Cook. It is his second term in prison. Crime: Grand Larceny. Sentenced 4 December 1871 to five years by Bedford.²¹

Apparently, the conviction and incarceration were big news. Headlined as “Crowded Condition of the City Prison—Pickpocket Sentenced,” various newspaper articles stated, “New York, Dec. 4. The notorious pickpocket, Abraham Green, alias Greenthal, was to-day sentenced to five years in state prison for picking the pocket of Arthur Green [in New York].”²²

About the end of 1871, The General and about 50 other prisoners were transferred from Sing Sing to Auburn State Prison.²³

The General was in Auburn State Prison, working in the kitchen, when a major riot occurred there although he was not a participant in the riot. He was described as being rich.²⁴

The General sought to appeal his conviction in April, but the case was not immediately heard.²⁵

²¹ Monday, 4 December 1871, Inmate admission registers, 1842-1971, B0143-80; New York State Archives, Record Group B0143, re: Sing Sing Prison. Inmate admission registers, 1842-1971 (bulk 1842-1852, 1865-1971) , 76.1 cu. ft. (149 volumes), Admission records for Box 2, Vol. 10, p. 273, entry 1212.

²² Tuesday, 5 December 1871, *Evening Courier & Republic*, Buffalo, NY, Vol. XI, No. 286, p 4, col. 7; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, Buffalo, NY, Vol. XXXVI, No. 286, p. 3, col. 8; *Syracuse Daily Standard*, Syracuse, NY, Vol. 25, No. 285, p. 1, col. 5; Wednesday, 6 December 1871, *The Syracuse Daily Journal*, Syracuse, NY, Vol. XXVII, No. 286, p. 5, col. 2; and Wednesday, 6 December 1871 *Albany Argus*, Albany, NY, p. 1, col. 3. Note that all of these articles incorrectly list the victim as “Arthur Green” when his name is correctly “Arthur C. Taylor.” On Thursday, 7 December 1871, *Independent Statesman*, Concord, NH, Issue 10, Col. D, p. 76, also mentions the event but without naming the complaining witness.

²³ Thursday, 4 January 1872, *Elkhart Review*, Elkhart, Indiana, Vol. 12, No. 49, p. 4, col. 1. For a photograph of the prison exterior, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AuburnPrisonFront.jpg/>.

²⁴ *Der Deutsche Correspondent*, Baltimore, Maryland, Tuesday, 2 July 1872, p. 1, col. 5.

²⁵ Thursday, 18 April 1872, *New York Times*, p. 9, col. 2: Court Calendar—Supreme Court—General Term, before Judges Ingraham, P. J., and Barnard and Cardozo, Justices: No. 74, *Greenthal v. The People*.

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After an uprising in Auburn State Prison, a reporter wrote about the conditions sometime later. He noted that General Greenthal, the rich convict, is following the occupation of “dish scavenger” in the dining room, and seems to be happy.²⁶

The newspapers were otherwise quiet about him until one curious event is reported in the *New York Herald*, nearly 11 months after the General went to Sing Sing.

Detective Doings.—Emanuel Cortez, with half a dozen aliases, was arrested yesterday morning for passing worthless drafts on a number of firms in different parts of the city. Cortez, the police say, is an old and prolific offender. He is a Spaniard and more than usually cunning. At the time of his arrest and for some weeks previous Cortez was living with the family of the notorious “General Greenthal;” and it would appear the Spaniard intended to do away with the ordinary adage, “honor among thieves,” in their case, as he owed a bill for board and had some intention of going away and forgetting it. When Detective Reilly went to the house to make the arrest, the young lady who presides over the establishment was amazed, not that Cortez was arrested, but that he should have been at work and kept the fact to himself. She turned upon him and exclaimed, “What! you pulled off a trick yesterday and said nothing about it? Well!” The balance of the speech is not necessary. Cortez was taken to Police Headquarters and locked up. The police will conduct him before Judge Hogan, at the Tombs, this morning.²⁷

Less than one month later, Howe & Hummel, as the General’s attorneys, appealed his conviction in the Supreme Court. The appeal was first set to be heard in mid-November but was postponed to near the end of the month.²⁸

²⁶ Sunday, 30 June 1872, *New York Herald*, p. 7, col. 3: The Auburn Convicts. The Discipline of the State Prison Fully Restored—The Ringleaders All in Close Confinement. Auburn, NY, Saturday, 29 June 1872.

²⁷ Wednesday, 23 October 1872, p. 5, col. 6.

²⁸ Monday, 18 November 1872, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 3: Court Calendar—Supreme Court—General Term, before Judges Ingraham, P. J., and Leonard and Brady, Justices: No. 80, Greenthal v. The People. Tuesday, 26 November 1872, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 3: Court Calendar—Supreme Court—General Term, before Judges Ingraham, P. J., and Learned and Leonard, Justices: No. 80, Greenthal v. The People. In the report cited in n. 26 Judge Brady is identified as Judge Larned.

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The *New York Evening Post* carried the report of the outcome of the appeal. The Court of General Sessions: The Extension of the Last November Term Illegal. Abraham Greenthal, alias General Greenthal, was tried on the 4th of December last for picking pockets, and convicted. On the trial Mr. Hummel, his counsel, took the point that Judge Bedford had improperly extended his November Term, and so the proceeding was *coram non judice*. The point having been overruled, he raised it again by appeal, and the General Term have agreed with him, and granted Greenthal a new trial.²⁹

The *New York Herald* reported the events about the case in great detail. The Case of Abraham Greenthal. Conviction of Larceny from the Person—Hearing Before the Supreme Court, General Term, Upon the Appeal from the General Sessions Verdict—Reversal of the Previous Judgment and the Prisoner Granted a New Trial. On 25 November 1871 Arthur C. Taylor, a bookkeeper employed by A. S. Barnes & Co., drew \$250 from a bank and in passing through John Street on his way back to the office was jostled by a stranger and then discovered that his money was gone from his outside overcoat pocket. The stranger rushed into a store with Mr. Taylor following him. Two packages of the stolen money were found on the store counter, but \$100 disappeared and remain so. The robber was well dressed, of unmistakable gentlemanly appearance, and polite, with an astonished and innocent air. This stranger was arrested and proved to be Abraham Greenthal, alias Abraham Green, alias “The General.” He uses other aliases too numerous to mention. He was indicted, tried in the Court of General Sessions, convicted, and sentenced to five years in State Prison. William F. Howe, his counsel, appealed the General Sessions verdict to the Supreme Court, General Term. Yesterday at the Supreme Court hearing before Judges Ingraham, Leonard, and Larned, Mr. Howe called the trial *coram non judice* because conducted by the intervention of an illegal jury—a dead jury; a jury which

²⁹ Tuesday, 26 November 1872, *New York Evening Post*, p. 4, col. 3. See also Wednesday, 27 November 1872, *New York Times*, p. 8, col. 2, *New York and Suburban News* [for unknown reasons, the *New York Times* carried the story again, Saturday, 7 December 1872 *New York Times*, Vol. XVII, No. 23, Miscellaneous, p. 1, col. 8, but indicating that the events had occurred the previous day. The article in the Saturday, 7 December 1872, *The Troy Weekly Times*, Vol. XVII, No. 23, p. 1, col. 8, commits the same error.]; Wednesday, 27 November 1872 *Auburn Daily Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 859, p. 2, col. 2; Wednesday, 27 November 1872, *Troy Daily Times*, Troy, NY, Vol. XXII, No. 154, p. 2, col. 3.; Wednesday, 27 November 1872, *Utica Daily Observer*, Utica, NY, Vol. XXV, No. 183, p.1, col. 4; Wednesday, 27 November 1872, *Evening Courier & Republic*, Buffalo, NY, Vol. XII, No. 283, p. 4, Col. 2, Judicial; Wednesday, 27 November 1872 *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Vol. 26, No. 100, p. 1, col. 6; Wednesday, 27 November 1872, *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, Cincinnati, Ohio, p. 5, col. 2; Wednesday, 27 November 1872, *Springfield Daily Republican*, Springfield, MA, Vol. X, No. 285, p. 5, col. 4; Wednesday, 27 November 1872 *Cleveland Daily Herald*, Vol. 38, Issue 285, p. 1, col. 4; Wednesday, 27 November 1872 *Nashville Union and American*, New Series, No. 1,354, p. 1, col. 5, “Gum-Elastic Juries.” Thursday, 28 November 1872 *The Albany Argus*, Vol. XLVI, No. 17,550, p. 1, col. 4, in an article dated 26 November, with a subheading of “Judgment Reversed,” carried news to the same effect.

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cannot be galvanized into legal vitality. The petty jury before whom the prisoner was tried had no legal right to sit or to be empaneled, being a petty jury called and empaneled for the November term of the Court; that this trial was taking place in December, that the defendant was entitled to a full panel of jurors summoned for the December term, that having been deprived of those challenges on that panel, the prisoner had been illegally tried and convicted, and that therefore the whole proceedings were null and void. Howe argued that there was not even a court with which to commune on the day of the prisoner's trial. Howe alleged that not only had the Court no right to sit on the 4th of December, after the first Monday of December, but the jury summoned for December had died, or become *functus officio* on the morning of the first Monday of December. Howe claimed that the course pursued exposed the prisoner to a permanent, packed, or pliant petit panel. Assistant District Attorney Sullivan, in opposition, stated that he had looked through the bill of exceptions, and, as the Court had already ruled upon the same point raised in the appeal from the verdict in the case of Anne E. Burns, he thought it unnecessary to occupy the Court's time with any formal response to the argument of opposing counsel. Judge Ingraham, who pronounced the decision of the Court, said that any opposing argument was unnecessary, and in accordance with its previous ruling in the Burns case, ordered the judgment of the Court of General Sessions to be set aside and a new trial to be granted to the prisoner.³⁰

When Abraham was not immediately released as a result of this decision, on Wednesday, 27 November 1872, his attorneys again went to court, filing a Petition for a Writ of *Habeas Corpus*. It stated, "Abraham Greenthal is detained by the Warden of the Auburn State Prison because his conviction for larceny of the person in the Court of General Sessions of the Peace of the City and County of New York has been reversed by the General Term of the Supreme Court and a new trial ordered. The Warden is to be ordered by the Supreme Court to present Abraham Greenthal before the Court on [Friday,] 29 November 1872 at 10:30 a. m."³¹ As the New York *Commercial Advertiser* reported, Habeas Corpus for Greenthal. Judge Fancher this morning issued a writ of *habeas corpus*

³⁰ Wednesday, 27 November 1872, p. 8, cols 1 and 2-3. Nn. 24 and 32 identify one judge as Brady and not Larned.

³¹ Sworn out on Tuesday, 26 November 1872 and signed by Mally Greenthal [Abraham's eldest daughter, Malvina] on behalf of the prisoner on 26 November 1872 and notarized by Hummel. Held in the New York County Clerk's Office, *op. cit.*, Chapter 4, note 3. The Petition is numbered WR-G1605 and was prepared by William Howe personally, of Howe & Hummel. It was notarized by Hummel.

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to bring Abraham Greenthal from Auburn Prison under the decision of the General Term, granting him a new trial on the indictment for larceny, on which he was convicted.³²

The General was finally ordered released. He was discharged on the following day, Thursday, 28 November. The record of the release is quite detailed in the holdings of the New York State Archives:

Name - Abraham Green *alias* Abraham Greenthal
Discharge date - [Thursday,] Nov. 28, 1872
County where convicted - New York [*i. e.* Manhattan]
Date when convicted - [Thursday,] Dec. 14, 1871
Court - Sessions [*i. e.* Court of General Sessions]
Crime - grand larceny
Sentence - 5 years
Former trade or occupation - peddler
Employment in prison - kitchen
Employed when arrested - yes
Color - white
Age - 55
Birthplace - Germany
Degree of instruction - common [school]
Height - 5 ft. 7 ½ in.
No. times before confined in state prison - once
No. times before confined in county prison [*i. e.* jail or penitentiary] - no crime for which before confined in state prison - receiving stolen goods
Duration of punishment when before in [state] prison - 3 years
To what prison previously sent - Sing Sing
Date of present pardon - [Wednesday,] Nov. 27, 1872
How discharged - "Habeas Corpus" [see NOTE below]
By whom pardoned - E. L. Fancher [Enoch L. Fancher, the judge, on Wednesday, 27 November 1872.
Not technically a "pardon" in this case.]
Social relations - married
Parents - "no" [apparently means not living]
Children - four
Habits of life - temperate
Read and write - yes
Religious instruction - "Isralite" [*i. e.* Israelite, Jewish]

³² Wednesday, 27 November 1872, p. 4, col. 2. See also Wednesday, 27 November 1872, *Evening Post*, New York, Vol. 71, p. 4, col. 3.

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How committed - jury [verdict]

By whom committed - G. S. Bedford [judge]

Unexpired time - 4 months [*i. e.* before end of sentence]

State of health when committed - good

State of health when discharged - poor

Value of articles stolen - \$100.00

The information furnished by the General is not necessarily accurate although the General's age is exactly correct. The New York State Archives appended the following note.

NOTE: "*Habeas corpus*" refers of course to a writ of *habeas corpus*, and the record indicates that Greenthal was released by order of a judge (E. L. Fancher). Black's Law Dictionary, 4th ed., states that "*habeas corpus*" is "the name given to a variety of writs . . . having for their object to bring a party before a court or judge." One of the uses of the writ was to "release [a prisoner] from unlawful imprisonment." The writ of *habeas corpus* obtained by or for Greenthal/Meyer may be on file in the county clerk's office in the county where the judge (Fancher) held office. If that county was New York (*i. e.* Manhattan), the writ of *habeas corpus* may be on file at the New York County Clerk's Office, 31 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10007. The use of the term "pardon" to refer to release of a prisoner who has obtained a writ of *habeas corpus* is unusual, at least in modern legal parlance.³³

The newspapers reported on the General being freed from Auburn State Prison the next day.

The Greenthal Case. Justice Fancher, in the Supreme Court, Chambers, yesterday, granted a writ of *habeas corpus*, to bring Abraham, alias "General" Greenthal, from Auburn, the General Term of the Supreme Court having allowed him a new trial.³⁴

Abraham Green, *alias* Greenthal, discharged from Auburn State Prison yesterday on a writ of *habeas corpus*, allowed by Judge E. L. Fancher of the Supreme Court, New York, [Wednesday,] 27 November, demanding that the prisoner be delivered on [Friday,] 29 November. Greenthal was sentenced on [Monday,] 4 December 1871 to five years in Sing Sing for grand larceny and transferred to Auburn. He worked in the mess room, along with Rosenzweig, the abortionist. His wife came from New York on Saturday night, bringing the papers for his release and transfer to that city. The two were taken to New York City by train last evening. The article recounts the Wednesday, 27

³³ From New York State Archives, Record Group B0068, Auburn Prison, Registers of male inmates discharged, 1817-1949, 6 cu. ft. (8 volumes). Discharge record for "Abraham Green *alias* Abraham Greenthal" is found in Vol. 2. The appended note is an indication of how unusual such a release is.

³⁴ Thursday, 28 November 1872, *New York Herald*, p. 5, col. 3.

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November 1872, *New York Herald* facts in the case. Greenthal was well-dressed, gentlemanly, and polite. The accused could not be tried by a November Term petit jury in December, held the Supreme Court. A new trial was granted to the prisoner.³⁵

It is doubtful that The General ever even heard of Gilbert and Sullivan and their operettas, but Ko-Ko's soliloquy does seem as though it might have been inspired by Greenthal's case.

Ko-Ko's entrance

Taken from the county jail
By a set of curious chances;
Liberated then on bail,
On my own recognizances:
Wafted by a favoring gale
As one sometimes is in trances,
To a height that few can scale,
Save by long and weary dances;
Surely, never had a male
Under such like circumstances
So adventurous a tale,
Which may rank with most romances.³⁶

In a later development, the case of the People vs. Greenthal, decided in the November 1871 term, was held by the recorder to be binding upon him. The case was decided in the Supreme Court, Justices Ingraham, Brady, and Leonard presiding, that the term of the grand jury was extended illegally. John K. Hackett, Recorder, 24 December 1872.³⁷ But life often holds surprises, as the General well knew, especially in his line of work.

The General was rearrested although no newspaper article so stating has been found. The arrest was probably in connection with the charge of grand larceny, which came on for trial in mid-February

³⁵ Friday, 29 November 1872, *Auburn Daily Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 860, p. 1, col. 4.

³⁶ Sullivan, Sir Arthur Seymour and William Schwenk Gilbert, *The Mikado or the Town of Titipu*, Boston, Oliver Ditson Company, n. d., 46 pp. <http://www.archive.org/stream/mikadolibrettoof00sulluoft#page/n0/mode/2up/>. Premiered in London on 14 March 1885.

³⁷ Tuesday, 24 December 1872, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 4, col. 1. The case was earlier cited as precedent in another matter, Monday, 2 December 1872 *New York Evening Telegram*, Vol. VI, No. 1,574, p. 1, col. 2. See n. 24.

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1873.³⁸ So on Monday, 30 December 1872,³⁹ the General's counsel [of Howe & Hummel] submitted a Petition for *Habeas Corpus*, requesting an order to have the warden of the city jail release Abraham Greenthal, who asks to be released on bail in an amount to be set by the Court. The Petition claims that Abraham Greenthal is detained on a charge for which he has already been tried, convicted, and successfully appealed to the Supreme Court, which granted a new trial. The petition sought to have the body of the prisoner in court on Thursday, 2 January 1873.⁴⁰ Thus, the General must have spent the New Year 1873 in the Tombs, the New York City jail.

³⁸ Based upon the new trial granted as a result of the reversal of the previous conviction. See n. 25.

³⁹ Petition WR-G1601 for a writ of *Habeas Corpus*—New York Supreme Court, held in the records of the New York County Clerk, Document WR-G1601. See http://www.courts.state.ny.us/supctmanh/county_clerk_records.htm/ and Luft, Edward David, and Abrams, Bruce, “Three Manhattan Databases: Using Newspapers to Find Bankruptcy Cases Leading to Court Cases,” *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, Bergenfield, NJ, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, Winter 2007, pp. 17-19.

⁴⁰ Monday, 30 December 1872 Petition for a writ of *habeas corpus*—New York Supreme Court, in the records of the New York County Clerk, WR-G1601. http://www.courts.state.ny.us/supctmanh/county_clerk_records.htm/ and Luft, Edward David, and Abrams, Bruce, “Three Manhattan Databases: Using Newspapers to Find Bankruptcy Cases Leading to Court Cases,” *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, Bergenfield, NJ, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, Winter 2007, pp. 17-19.

Chapter 6
In Prison and Up to His Old Tricks (1873-1875)

The General remained in jail not only after the New Year 1873 but until his trial in mid-February and afterwards.¹ Thus, it is unlikely that the General was able to attend the marriage of his eldest daughter Malea [or Malvina, sometimes called Mally or Molly] to Shimier Casper, son of Samuel Casper² and Miriam Blumenthal. Samuel Casper was also a career criminal, well-known to the police and a member of the General's Sheeny Gang,³ consisting of many of the General's relatives and some others. As we shall see, Shimier Casper would also have a promising career as a thief. Malea's parents are listed in the record as Abraham Greenthal and Anne Lesler. The marriage took place in Manhattan on Thursday, 30 January 1873.⁴

The *New York Times* indicated that the trial of Abraham Green/Abraham Greenthal on a charge of burglary was set for Thursday, 13 February 1873, in the Court of General Sessions, Part I, before Recorder Hackett.⁵

Reporting on the Court of General Sessions, Part I, proceedings on Saturday, 15 February 1873, the *New York Herald* noted:

The Case of "General Greenthal." Mr. William F. Howe is the counsel for Greenthal. Mr. Howe then called His Honor's attention to the case of Abraham Greenthal, alias "General" Greenthal, who, it will be remembered, was granted a new trial upon a conviction for grand larceny. The counsel offered to file a special plea a few days ago, but consented to withhold it in order to afford the District Attorney time to examine it. He [Mr. Howe] said it was idle to pretend that Greenthal could be tried upon that indictment, and asked that the District Attorney should either consent to the discharge or

¹ See n. 29.

² See Byrnes, Thomas, *1886 Professional Criminals of America*. <http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924096989177#page/n299/mode/2up/>, p. 225.

³ http://www.americanmafia.com/Feature_Articles_453.html

⁴ See Family History Library [Mormon] microfilm 1561857. A variation on Lesler was the name by which Abraham was known to the Prussian authorities. See Chapter 1. Why Hannah is listed as "Anne" is unknown, but see Chapter 9. Jewish custom requires that the eldest daughter be the first daughter to marry.

⁵ Thursday, 13 February 1873, p. 2, col. 3.

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that he be admitted to bail in a reasonable amount. Mr. Russell replied that his engagements were such that he had not had time to fully examine the plea. By mutual consent the case was set down for the next Thursday.⁶

Thus, the case came on for trial before Recorder Hackett of the Court of General Sessions on Thursday, 20 February 1873. The *New York Times* reported that on Thursday Abraham Greenthal, previously convicted of grand larceny, but given a new trial, was admitted to \$1,000 bail.⁷

Reporting on the same case on the same day, the *New York Herald* noted under the headline “Abraham, Alias ‘General,’ Greenthal Bailed. Before Recorder Hackett” before the trial of cases on the calendar yesterday Mr. Howe called the attention of the Court to the fact that the case of Abraham Greenthal was peremptorily set down for that day, and urged that his client be either tried or bailed. His Honor granted the motion to bail the prisoner, fixing the amount at \$1,000. It will be recollected that “General” Greenthal was convicted of grand larceny and served one year in the State Prison, but his counsel succeeded in getting a new trial.⁸

The problem was that the District Attorney did not obey the order to admit the General to bail so the General’s attorneys issued a Petition for a Writ of *habeas corpus* in which the Warden of the City Prison was directed to produce the prisoner. The Petition alleged that Abraham Greenthal was detained in the city prison on a charge of grand larceny. He avers that on a motion made for his liberation on bail in the Court of General Sessions of the Peace of the City and County of New York before the Hon. J. K. Hackett, Recorder of the City of New York, the Justice set bail of \$1,000, and the prisoner offered good and substantial bondsmen, but the District Attorney still refused to accept the surety for the liberation of the petitioner to answer the charge. The petitioner seeks a writ of *habeas corpus* directed to the Warden and that the petitioner be produced in Supreme Court on [blank] day of February 1873 at 10:30 a. m. Dated 22 February 1873. The Petition was filed on Thursday, 24 February 1873.⁹

The following day, the *New York Daily Tribune* carried a story that Abraham Greenthal was to have

⁶ Sunday, 16 February 1873, p. 10, col. 2.

⁷ Friday, 21 February 1873, p. 2, col. 5. The same facts were noted in the Thursday, 20 February 1873 *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 4, col. 2.

⁸ Friday, 21 February 1873, p. 8, col. 3.

⁹ New York Supreme Court, in the records of the New York County Clerk, WR-G1604. http://www.courts.state.ny.us/supctmanh/county_clerk_records.htm/ and Luft, Edward David, and Abrams, Bruce, “Three Manhattan Databases: Using Newspapers to Find Bankruptcy Cases Leading to Court Cases,” *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, Bergenfield, NJ, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, Winter 2007, pp. 17-19.

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been bailed yesterday, but that facts brought to the attention of the Recorder materially changed the aspect of the case as presented by the prisoner's counsel; and thus bail was refused.¹⁰ The exact nature of the information presented is not specified.

So the case of Abraham Greenthal for grand larceny was set for trial on Monday, 24 February 1873, in the Trial Term, Part II, before Judge Sutherland in the Court of General Sessions.¹¹ On that day, however, his counsel, instead, made a motion to the Court. It was reported in the *New York Herald* the next day:

Court of General Sessions—Part I. Another Protest from Mr. Howe—Judge Bedford's Extended Petit Jury—The Greenthal Case. Before Judge Sutherland. The first case on the calendar in this Court yesterday was that of Abraham Greenthal, indicted for grand larceny. The prisoner having been called to the bar, Mr. Howe, as his counsel, said he had a most important motion to make to the Court. His client was one of the fifty or sixty cases that were tried during the extended term of Judge Bedford's grand, patient, elastic, accommodating petit jury; that having been drawn in the panel of November 1871, was continued by Judge Bedford through December, in spite of his earnest solicitations and protestations at the time. Greenthal had, however, been tried, found guilty, and sentenced to five years in the State Prison. Of that term he had undergone nearly a year's imprisonment, when the General Term reversed the judgment on the ground that Judge Bedford's action had been irregular. A new indictment had, however, been returned against Greenthal, and he had pleaded not guilty. He now asked leave to withdraw that plea and interpose in its stead a plea that, having been already put in jeopardy of his liberty for this offense, he could not be subjected to the same ordeal over again. District Attorney Rollins demurred, and said that the motion seemed to him to be very singular in its character. Counsel had gone to the General Term and argued that the proceedings were absolutely void, and upon that plea had secured a reversal of the judgment. Now, however, that a new trial was ordered, they came into Court and pleaded that an absolutely void proceeding had put them in jeopardy.

Mr. Howe replied that the grounds he had argued before the General Term were of no importance now. He might have argued that Judge Bedford had no jurisdiction. It would not necessarily follow

¹⁰ Saturday, 22 February 1873, p. 12, col. 3.

¹¹ Monday, 24 February 1873, *New York Daily Tribune*, New York, NY, p. 3, col. 2.

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that such was the fact. The question was “What were the proceedings?” and he claimed that they were in all respects regular, except so far as regarded the jury, and therefore the prisoner had in fact been put in jeopardy.¹²

Clearly, the case was not tried that day in order to give the presiding judge time to consider the motion. The case was rescheduled for trial on Monday, 3 March 1873.¹³ It was postponed yet again for one day.¹⁴ Finally, on Wednesday, counsel filed a rejoinder. Greenthal’s attorney announced that he would be ready to argue the case tomorrow.¹⁵ In the event, the motion was not argued until that Thursday.¹⁶ Greenthal’s counsel, having filed his rejoinder to the application of the District Attorney on the question of the legality of again trying Greenthal for the offence charged, was able to argue the motion.

At this point, Howe & Hummel took a dramatic step. Ex-Mayor Hall appeared in the Court of General Sessions before Judge Sutherland for General Greenthal. [Hall’s term of office as Mayor had recently expired.¹⁷] Hall admitted that the prisoner had been tried and convicted of a felony, had served a portion of his sentence, but had been ordered to have a new trial by the General Term, and had been brought down from State Prison for that purpose. He admitted that the indictment was perfectly legal. But the Bedford Jury system was irregular and illegal. Hall claimed that Greenthal, having already been tried and convicted, could not be placed in jeopardy again. Assistant District Attorney Rollins replied that Greenthal had not ever been tried at all since the jury was illegal, and could not thus have been put in jeopardy. He claimed that the prisoner could be tried again on the old indictment on the grounds of a mistrial. Sutherland asked for papers and reserved his decision.¹⁸

As usual, the *New York Herald* reported more extensively.

¹² Tuesday, 25 February 1873, *New York Herald*, New York, NY, p. 8, col. 5. The Assistant District Attorney was Daniel G. Rollins; see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_G._Rollins/.

¹³ Monday, 3 March 1873, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 2, col. 5.

¹⁴ Tuesday, 4 March 1873, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 5.

¹⁵ Wednesday, 5 March 1873, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, p. 4, col. 3.

¹⁶ Thursday, 6 March 1873, *New York Times*, p. 8, col. 2.

¹⁷ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._Oakey_Hall/.

¹⁸ Friday, 7 March 1873, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 4. See also Thursday, 6 March 1873 *The Daily Graphic*, New York, Vol. I, No. 3, p. 7, col. 1. Also briefly reported in the Wednesday, 12 March 1873 *The Deseret News*, Salt Lake City, Vol. XXII, No. 6, p. 12, col. 2.

In Prison and Up to His Old Tricks (1873-1875)

Court of General Sessions. The case of Abraham Greenthal Again—Ex-Mayor Hall Argues a Motion—The City Judge Reserves His Decision. Before Judge Sutherland. Almost the entire session of this Court yesterday was occupied in arguing a demurrer and a rejoinder to it in the case of Abraham Greenthal, who, it will be remembered, was tried, convicted, and sentenced to the State Prison for five years for grand larceny at the historic extended November term of the General Sessions. Mr. Howe secured a reversal of the judgment after Greenthal had served a year of his sentence in the State Prison on the ground of the illegality of the jury by whom the accused was tried. The prosecution now seek to retry the same indictment, to which the prisoner's counsel object, mainly on the ground that Greenthal has been once in jeopardy. The defendant was not present in court yesterday during the argument. He was represented by Mr. A. Oakley Hall and Mr. Wm. F. Howe. The presence of the ex-Mayor in the General Sessions gave additional interest to the proceedings, and it is needless to state that the dry questions of law discussed and the apposite quotations from ancient and modern cases bearing upon the question at issue were made interesting by the flashes of wit and brilliant rhetoric for which the ex-Executive and ex-District Attorney is distinguished.

Mr. Hall, in the course of his argument, said that the question which His Honor was called upon to decide was a somewhat novel and very important one—viz., whether a man who had, in the full constitutional sense of the word, been fully put in jeopardy shall be placed upon trial again after having suffered his execution.

Assistant District Attorney Rollins, in replying to Mr. Hall's able and ingenious argument, claimed that the accused was not put in jeopardy, from the fact that he was not convicted by a legally constituted jury, and cited numerous cases to show that the defendant was not put in jeopardy in the legal sense of that term.

Judge Sutherland intimated that such was his view; but Greenthal having served part of his sentence presented a somewhat novel question, which he would fully examine. He took the papers in the case and reserved his decision.¹⁹

Various other papers reported the case, essentially naming the issue as one of double jeopardy. As the *New York Daily Tribune* put it, "The prisoner's counsel claimed double jeopardy. The issue is whether a man convicted of a felony, who of his own volition gets the judgment reversed, can be retried for the same offense."²⁰

¹⁹ Friday, 7 March 1873, *New York Herald*, p. 8, col. 3. It should be noted that Ex-Mayor Hall later wrote for the *New York Herald*, as discussed in the website in n. 17.

²⁰ Friday, 7 March 1873, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 3, col. 2. See also Friday, 7 March 1873, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, San Francisco, CA, Vol. XXV, Issue 129, p. 2, col. 3.

Stop Thief! The True Story of Abraham Greenthal

On Tuesday, 18 March 1873, Isaac Bell, one of the five Commissioners of Public Charities and Correction of the City of New York,²¹ paid an inspection visit to the Tombs and found Greenthal there. Bell asked Greenthal about his accommodations in jail, and Greenthal replied that he had no complaints.²²

By this time, the General had become so notorious to the police that he even inspired a practical joke played on visiting London police by the New York City police.²³

After deliberating over 1½ months, Judge Sutherland finally rendered his opinion. Again, it was the *New York Herald* which carried an extensive report of the matter:

“General” Greenthal to Be Tried Again. Yesterday afternoon His Honor City Judge Sutherland filed, with the Clerk of the Court, an elaborate opinion in the case of The People vs. Abraham Greenthal. It will be remembered that last month Mr. A. Oakley Hall, in an extended argument, claimed that the accused, having been once put in jeopardy by a previous trial and conviction, having actually commenced his term of imprisonment in the State Prison, could not be retried upon the same indictment. The City Judge discusses all the questions raised upon the argument and concludes thus:—“Though it is impossible for me in view of controlling reported decisions and precedents to decide as matter of law that the prisoner cannot be tried again on the same indictment, yet as the prisoner’s former formal trial and conviction and sentence appears to have taken place not only without fraud on his part, but against his protest, it is to be presumed, if on his second trial he should be convicted, that the most evident principle of natural justice would induce the Court in passing sentence on his conviction to take into consideration the time of his actual imprisonment under the reversed judgment. There must be judgment for the people on the demurrer, with permission for the prisoner to renew his plea of not guilty.”²⁴

²¹ New York Common Council, *Manual ... City of New York ... 1870, op. cit.*, p. 62; [<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?view=image;size=100;id=mdp.39015068435505;page=root;seq=80;num=62>].

²² Wednesday, 19 March 1873, *New York Herald*, p. 7, col. 5, “Inspecting the Tombs.”

²³ The essence of the joke revolved around the idea of a professional pickpocket of the level of General Greenthal. See Saturday, 12 April 1873, *The World*, New York, p. 12, col. 6; article copied on Monday, 14 April 1873, *Buffalo Evening Courier and Republic*, Vol. XIV, No. 91, p. 1, col. 7.

²⁴ Thursday, 24 April 1873, *New York Herald*, p. 13, col. 3.

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Although the General was in prison at this time, the New York City Directory lists Abraham Greenthal as living at 66 Mott Street, between Canal and Bayard Streets, and working as a peddler. The *New York Herald* confirmed that “The General” was in prison at this time.²⁵

Just about a month after Judge Sutherland’s decision, Abraham Greenthal again submitted a Petition for a writ of *habeas corpus* to the Supreme Court. The Petition is directed to the Warden of the City Prison of the City of New York. The charge against Greenthal is grand larceny. He is held without bail being fixed by the Justice who committed him. He seeks a writ of certiorari, issued to the Clerk of the Court of General Sessions of the Peace of the City and County of New York and a writ of *habeas corpus* to the Warden of the City Prison of the City of New York for the prisoner to appear before the Supreme Court on Wednesday, 28 May 1873.²⁶

That Petition was apparently unsuccessful because a month later Abraham Greenthal filed yet another Petition for Writ of *habeas corpus*, again to the New York Supreme Court, pointing out that Abraham Greenthal had been detained in the New York City jail on a charge of larceny since the previous December without bail. The Petitioner points out that he was brought before Enoch L. Fancher, a Justice of the Supreme Court, and that Justice Fancher set bail at \$1,000, which the Petitioner avers that he is ready to give. Accordingly, the Petitioner asks that the Warden of the City Prison produce the body of the Petitioner on Monday, 23 June 1873, at 10:30 a. m. Attached to the Petition is an order signed by E. L. Fancher, Justice of the Supreme Court, in the cases of The People against Abraham Greenthal in the New York Court of General Sessions on an indictment for grand larceny to have the accused admitted to bail in the amount of \$1,000.²⁷

²⁵ Monday, 12 May 1873, p. 5, col. 5.

²⁶ Monday, 26 May 1873, Petition for a writ of *habeas corpus*—New York Supreme Court, in the records of the New York County Clerk, WR-G1602. http://www.courts.state.ny.us/supctmanh/county_clerk_records.htm/ and Luft, Edward David, and Abrams, Bruce, “Three Manhattan Databases: Using Newspapers to Find Bankruptcy Cases Leading to Court Cases,” *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, Bergenfield, NJ, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, Winter 2007, pp. 17-19.

²⁷ The order recites that the Justice has heard arguments by both William F. Howe, Counsel for the prisoner and George Lyons, Esq., Assistant District Attorney, in opposition to the motion. Justice Fancher’s order is dated [Wednesday,] 18 June 1873. Similar to the previous note, but numbered WR-G1603, dated Friday, 20 June 1873. Hannah Greenthal had petitioned for her husband Abraham for \$1,000 bail. Her autograph in Roman letters is on the petition.

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That application was evidently also unsuccessful because on Friday, 27 June, the Court refused his counsel's motion to admit Greenthal to bail, and the case was set down for the first Monday in July.²⁸ So the case appeared on the Calendar for the Supreme Court for Monday, 7 July 1873.²⁹

After all of the motions and maneuvering, there was one more surprise in open court. The first report of it came from across the East River in Brooklyn: *New York Criminals*.—General “Abe” Greenthal, in whose case William F. Howe, his counsel, was to make a motion for a new trial, was placed at the bar to-day and pleaded guilty to grand larceny. Judge Sutherland taking into consideration the time Greenthal had already been incarcerated in prison, mitigated his sentence to one year and six months in the State Prison.³⁰

As usual, the next day, the *New York Herald*³¹ ran the most complete account of the case: “General” Greenthal Sent to the State Prison for Eighteen Months. Abraham Green, alias “General Greenthal,” was placed at the bar, and Mr. Rollins announced that the prisoner wished to withdraw his plea of “not guilty” and plead guilty to the charge of grand larceny. It will be remembered that Greenthal, who has been frequently before the bar of the criminal courts, was convicted in December 1871, of stealing \$250 from the person of Arthur C. Taylor on the 25th of November. Mr. Howe succeeded in getting a new trial for Greenthal after he entered upon the expiation of his sentence to the State Prison. He has remained in the City Prison for several months awaiting trial. The Judge, in passing sentence, said that it was only proper that the time which Greenthal served for this offense should be deducted from the punishment. His Honor sentenced him to the State Prison for eighteen months.

Thus, the General was sent to Sing Sing Prison, Ossining, New York, arriving on Wednesday, 9 July 1873:

Admission records for Abraham Green alias Greenthal. 9 July. 2nd term of imprisonment.

²⁸ Friday, 27 June 1873, *New York Evening Post*, p. 4, col. 7. To the same effect, Saturday, 28 June 1873, *New York Evening Telegram*, Vol. VI, No. 1,749, p. 1, col. 2, under Town Topics.

²⁹ Monday, 7 July 1873, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 2, col. 6. Abraham Green, *alias* Abraham Greenthal, grand larceny.

³⁰ Monday, 7 July 1873, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Vol. 34, No. 158, p. 4, col. 3.

³¹ Tuesday, 8 July 1873, p. 5, col. 2. To the same effect, Tuesday, 8 July 1873, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 5. The *Evening Express*, New York, NY, of the same day, under “Court of General Sessions: First Day of the July Term,” p. 1, col. 3, noted the events in a shorter version, and the *Richmond Daily Whig*, Richmond, VA, merely states under “General Items” that “Greenthall, the bond-robber, was sentenced to one year and a half...today.” Tuesday, 8 July 1873, Vol. 15, No. 162, p. 3, col. 4.

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Received from New York. Born in Prussia, age 46.³² Wife resides at 191 Canal Street, New York City. He resided at 50 Ludlow Street,³³ New York City, at the time of his arrest. 5' 8½" 205 lbs. Florid complexion, black hair, blue eyes. Israelite. Moderate [non-alcoholic]. Peddler. Slightly bald in front, wart on right side of face. Convicted of Grand Larceny and sentenced 7 July 1873 to one and one half years imprisonment by Sutherland.³⁴

That same day several newspapers reported Greenthal's arrival at Sing Sing that morning.³⁵ The *New York Times*, being a morning newspaper, reported the event the next morning, noting that Greenthal was taken from his cell and sent by train in a separate car with other prisoners to Sing Sing.³⁶

As usual, the *New York Herald* gave the matter more extensive treatment: By 9:45 a. m, all the convicts for Sing Sing were in the corridor handcuffed—two cuffs on each wrist of Greenthal. ... After the discovery of a huge snuff-box of ancient design in Gen. Greenthal's breast pocket, four large pieces of bread were found in his coat pockets. Although not considered a dangerous weapon, the bread was confiscated by the keepers as being calculated to interfere with the General's appetite, and so prevent him from enjoying his first meal in Sing Sing.... Abraham Green, alias Gen. Abraham Greenthal, pleaded guilty in the Court of General Sessions on 7 July to grand larceny, and in consideration of the fact that he had been already confined in prison for two and a half years, owing to vexatious delays, was sentenced to one and a half years in the State Prison.³⁷

The Sun, New York, provided the same information from a somewhat different viewpoint: Abraham Greenthal among the prisoners transported from New York to Sing Sing. After handcuffing, the prisoners were searched. "Nothing was found in the pockets of any person except Greenthal. That

³² Clearly an incorrect age, probably supplied by Greenthal himself, and not checked against the prior intake records. See the 28 November 1872 intake record, Chapter 5.

³³ See Chapter 4, n. 3.

³⁴ From New York State Archives, Record Group B0143-80; Sing Sing Prison. Inmate admission registers, 1842-1971 (bulk 1842-1852, 1865-1971), 76.1 cu. ft. (149 volumes), Box 3, Vol. 11, p. 136.

³⁵ Wednesday, 9 July 1873, *The Daily Graphic: An Illustrated Evening Newspaper*, New York City, Issue 109, page 54, col. 1; Wednesday, 9 July 1873, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, p. 4, col. 5.

³⁶ Thursday, 10 July 1873, p. 2, col. 6.

³⁷ Thursday, 10 July 1873, p. 3, col. 5. State Prison Victims: Walworth's Traveling Companions.

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gentlemen had a six-bladed knife and a snuff box in his breeches pocket, which articles of vertu³⁸ were taken.... In his coat pockets were six French rolls, of which he was also dispossessed, the Sheriff saying that he would find plenty to eat in Sing Sing. Greenthal cast a hungry, wistful look at the rolls as they were taken from him, but said nothing.”³⁹

Shortly after the events of Wednesday, 9 July, the *New York Times* took the opportunity to run an article on various criminals, noting that one who was then free was the brother of Abraham Greenthal.⁴⁰ In the middle of July various newspapers around the country carried the story.⁴¹

Now Abraham, while he was in prison, missed the wedding of his third daughter, Francis [sic]. The wedding took place on Monday, 28 August 1873.⁴² It was the marriage of Francis Greenthal to Rudolph Aaron in Manhattan. He was the son of Jacob Aaron and Fanny Solomon. She was the daughter of Abraham Greenthal and Hannah David.⁴³

Even though the General was in prison, members of his gang on the outside were still active. As the *New York Times* reported, Charles Smith, *alias* French Charley, was a son-in-law of General

³⁸ Variation on “virtu,” art objects. See <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/vertu/>.

³⁹ Thursday, 10 July 1873, *The Sun*, New York, Vol. XL, No. 265, p. 1, col. 3. From “Walworth’s Living Tomb.” The report in the Thursday, 10 July 1873, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 5, col. 5, was very similar, while that in the Thursday, 10 July 1873, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, Vol. VII, No. 59, p. 4, col. 5, was very brief with just the fact that Greenthal was sent to Sing Sing..

⁴⁰ A Family of Thieves. Harris Greenthal is the brother of Abraham, *alias* “General,” Greenthal, who was sent a few days ago to Sing Sing for pickpocketing. The police have always regarded his house with suspicion. Tuesday, 15 July 1873, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 8, col. 6.

⁴¹ Greenthall, the bond robber, was sentenced to a year and a half. Tuesday, 15 July 1873, *Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Georgia Journal & Messenger*, Macon, GA, Vol. LXVII, No. 5, p. 1, col. 7. A noted New York pickpocket, formerly known as “Gen.” Greenthal, while a convict in Auburn prison, has again been sent up to Sing Sing for his old tricks. Thursday, 17 July 1873, *Auburn Morning News*, Vol. 2, No. 316, p. 4, col. 1; and *Watkins Express*, Watkins, Schuyler County, NY, Vol. XX, No. 8 (Whole No. 996), Thursday, 17 July 1873, p. 1, col. 7, under the headline, “Frank H. Walworth Taken to Sing Sing.”

⁴² The New York City vital records list the marriage as having occurred on 28 August 1876. The Manhattan marriage certificate number is 5577.

⁴³ See Family History Library [Mormon] microfilm 1562178.

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Greenthal. French Charley was arrested with Edward Myers, *alias* White, *alias* Friedberg, for burglary.⁴⁴

After the General was arrested, as was the usual procedure in the family, his wife moved. In 1874 according to the New York City Directory, Hannah Greenthal lived at 2 Marion Street, between First and Third Avenues.

Just as the *New York Times* had done a month earlier,⁴⁵ the *New York Herald* now ran an article on New York criminals but limited to those in prison. It mentioned the General as having money in prison where he buys favors and a good job. He even insulted with impunity a representative of the *New York Herald* and others in the visitors' office.⁴⁶

While The Genreel was in jail,⁴⁷ a similar exposé article discussed Greenthal as part of a criminal elite: Sing Sing's Aristocracy. Greenthal Buying Freedom From Rigor. Greenthal has many visitors, and though the rules require that convicts may have visits only once in every three months, he has people call and see him at least once a week. He receives a great many packages and bundles which are never examined by the keepers, as required by prison regulations.⁴⁸

Greenthal appears to have been paroled from prison because he served only from 9 July 1873 until approximately September 1874.⁴⁹

General Greenthal was released from Sing Sing about 2 months ago and traveled to New York City with a noted thief, Charles McCann. At that time, Greenthal lived at 2 Marion Street. McCann sold

⁴⁴ Wednesday, 18 February 1874, *New York Times*, p. 8, col. 2. Which son-in-law he was is unclear.

⁴⁵ See n. 40.

⁴⁶ Wednesday, 12 August 1874, *New York Herald*, Letter to the Editor, p. 8, col. 1.

⁴⁷ See Thursday, 8 June 1874, *The New York Evening Express*, New York, NY, p. 4, col. 4.

⁴⁸ Sunday, 30 August 1874, *New York Sunday Mercury*, Vol. XXXVI, No 35, p. 8, col. 1.

⁴⁹ Unlike the situation with Auburn Prison, Sing Sing Prison release records have not been preserved.

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a watch worth \$250 there to one of Greenthal's daughters for \$13.⁵⁰ Frances and Rachel Greenthal were arrested on the morning of 23 November 1874 for the matter. Hirsch Greenthal, *alias* Hirsch Harris, and the Mandelbaum family are near relatives of General Greenthal.⁵¹

The era was one when the public wanted to read about criminals, and so we find another article in another newspaper on the subject. *A Rogues' Album. Sketches of Noted New York Criminals. Men Who Have Won Distinction in Their Calling—Phases of Criminal Society—Polished Swindlers and Bond Forgers. Harris & Co.—Receivers.* The eldest member of this circle of relatives is known as "General" Greenthal, and is said to be now serving a term in State Prison. He began life as a pickpocket and is now well advanced in years.⁵²

In 1875 according to the New York City Directory, Abraham Greenthal lived at 39 Rutgers Street, between Cherry and Madison Streets, and was a "peddlar."

Meanwhile, the Greenthal case, involving the Bedford elastic grand jury, was having political reverberations. Mr. Peckham states that the Recorder gave as his reason for the first ground of his decision to grant the request on the ground of want of proper allegations in a bill is based upon the decision of the General Term of the Supreme Court in the Greenthal case, that the November term of 1871 of the Court of General Sessions was illegally extended into the subsequent month, and that he was bound by that decision. No opinion had been given by the Supreme Court, General Term, and he had stated to the Recorder that it was impossible to argue as to what was decided in a case where no opinion had been written. Peckham requested the Recorder to consult the Supreme Court

⁵⁰ As reported in *The Sun* article, *op. cit.*, Saturday, 7 October 1871.

⁵¹ Tuesday, 24 November 1874, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 2. Indeed, Hirsch/Herman was Abraham's younger brother. Mrs. Mandelbaum, however, was a notorious fellow receiver of stolen property and surely socialized with Greenthal at her dinner parties but was no relation to him by blood or marriage. See Bryk, William, "The Scams of Grandma Fence," <http://www.nypress.com/article-7880-the-scams-of-grandma-fence.html/>; and Holub, Rona L., "Mandelbaum, Fredericka," <http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-01903.html/>. Prof. Holub is preparing a book on Fredericka Mandelbaum. Mrs. Mandelbaum was also known as "Marm" or "Mother Mandelbaum."

⁵² Tuesday, 5 January 1875, *The World*, New York, Vol. XV, No. 1495, Semi-Weekly Edition, p. 3, col. 5. The article incorrectly notes that he is still in prison.

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judges to ascertain what they had really decided. The Greenthal case was decided by consent as being governed by another case and that in neither case had the Supreme Court decided that the Bedford Grand Jury was illegal.⁵³

We find evidence of corruption turning up in another incident, this time involving a relative of the General, most likely his brother or a male in-law. A witness, testifying on the subject of corruption in New York City, told of knowing of a case of a celebrated shoplifter, a relation of Greenthal, who walked out of the front door of the prison, right in front of the Warden's office, and jumped into a wagon and drove away.⁵⁴

⁵³ Tammany Nominations: Action of the Judiciary Convention. Tuesday, 12 October 1875, *New York Herald*, p. 10, cols. 2. See Peckham, Rufus Wheeler (1838-1909), <http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/peckham-peisner.html/>. Peckham and Hackett were political rivals. In an article, "The Increase of Crime," in both Wednesday, 27 October, p. 4, col. 3, and Thursday, 28 October 1875 *Evening Express*, New York, NY, p. 4, col. 4, the Greenthal case is noted as having been discussed in a New York State Assembly committee meeting with a view toward reform. The same article ran on both days.

⁵⁴ Friday, 22 October 1875, *The New York Evening Telegram*, Vol. IX, No. 2,455, 2nd Edition, 3 p. m., p. 1, col. 4.

Chapter 7
“I Am a Bad Man” (1876-1880)

As noted in prior chapters, Abraham gave an interview published in *The Sun* on Saturday, 7 October 1871. A member of Beth Israel Bikur Cholim Congregation,⁵⁵ where The General and his whole family worshiped, read the article and brought it to the attention of officers of that Congregation. We see the events that unfolded as a result of a civil lawsuit which The General instigated in February 1876.

On Tuesday, 29 February 1876, Abraham, through his attorneys, issued a summons and complaint,⁵⁶ stating, in the case of Abraham Greenthal v. Congregation Beth Israel Bikur Cholim, that the Congregation, popularly known as the Chrystie Street Synagogue, has a burial ground in Cyprus Hills. Greenthal originally held men’s seat 342 and women’s seat 110 since 1855. The congregation since 1 September 1872 has refused his rent. He states that none of the family is allowed to worship at the synagogue. He seeks an injunction to accept rent and \$2,000 damages.

The defendant answered that plaintiff was excluded from the synagogue from Thursday, 7 December 1871, two months to the day after the *Sun* article appeared. The whole congregation twice ratified this decision. The plaintiff requested reinstatement on Sunday, 1 August 1875, which was refused. The Congregation then resolved that the plaintiff could worship, free of charge, in seats assigned by the president of the Congregation and to grant the right of burial in case of death, and the board of trustees ratified this decision. Plaintiff was given due notice of these proceedings and was given men’s seat 344 and women’s seat 112, which are the same class and adjoining the seats of those formerly occupied by plaintiff. The plaintiff agreed to the arrangement, and he and his wife worshiped in the synagogue in those seats.

The morning following the decision in the case, the *New York Times* carried an article about the decision. Abraham Greenthal was, in 1872, ejected from his seat in Congregation Beth Israel Bikur Cholim, which worships in the Chrystie Street Synagogue, because of his alleged bad character. He made an application for an injunction to Judge Joseph F. Daly, in the Special Term of the Court of Common Pleas, yesterday, for an injunction to restrain the congregation from turning him out of his seat, alleging his willingness to pay rent, &c. The congregation set up in answer that he was a

⁵⁵ For a photograph of the façade of Beth Israel Bikur Cholim synagogue, 56 Chrystie Street, New York City, as it appeared in 1847, before Beth Israel Bikur Cholim owned it, see <http://www.nycago.org/Organs/nyc/img/EmanuEl1847Ext.gif/>.

⁵⁶ In the records of the New York County Clerk, http://www.courts.state.ny.us/supctmanh/county_clerk_records.htm/. The complaint is dated 8 April 1876 and signed by Abraham Greenthal in Roman letters.

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notorious thief, and that, while perfectly willing to allow him to worship in the synagogue if he will take such place as may be assigned to him, they will not allow him to own a seat there. Judge Daly denied the injunction.⁵⁷

The *New York Herald* also ran the story. Attempt to Enjoin a Synagogue. Abraham Greenthal, better known as “General Greenthal.” was some time ago convicted in the Court of General Sessions of picking pockets and sentenced to one year and six months in the State Prison. After his conviction Congregation Beth Israel Bikur Cholim, of which he had been a member, expelled him from membership, but offered to allow him to worship in the synagogue free of expense. The “General” moved before Judge J. F. Daly, in the Common Pleas, Special Term, for an injunction against the congregation to prevent them from interfering with him while acting as a member. Judge Daly, after hearing argument, denied the motion. Sidney B. Stuart, Jr., appeared for the “General” and ex-Judge Cardozo for the congregation.⁵⁸

Other newspapers also mentioned the story.⁵⁹

The next weekend, *The Sun* gave the case far more extensive treatment.

Must a Church Member Be Moral?—How the Question Is Viewed by the Beth Israel Bikur Cholim.—The Congregation contests the demand of Abraham Greenthal that he shall be recognized as one of its members, and he, having applied for an injunction against being restrained of his rights as a member, has had his temporary claim denied, and the demand for a permanent order to that effect is to be argued within twenty days. The issue is whether notorious and confessed immorality is disqualifying for a member of a religious body. The Congregation states that money from polluted sources should not enter the congregation. Greenthal was a member and some four years ago an article about some pickpocketing appeared in *The Sun* about his pickpocketing here and in Europe. The Board of Trustees of the congregation ascertained that he had been found guilty by a jury in the Court of General Sessions of grand larceny. They expelled him but the verdict was reversed on technical grounds. At a new trial, he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to one and

⁵⁷ Tuesday, 23 May 1876, p. 2, cols. 4-5. Even the Presbyterians took not of the matter. See Wednesday, 3 January 1877, *Herald and Presbyter*, Cincinnati, OH, *Christian Herald*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 48; *Presbyter*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 16, p. 8, cols. 2-3.

⁵⁸ Tuesday, 23 May 1876, *New York Herald*, p. 9, col. 2.

⁵⁹ Tuesday, 23 May 1876, *New York Tribune*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 10,966, p. 2, col. 2. *The Sun* set forth the arguments for both sides. Thursday, 25 May 1876, *The Sun*, New York, Vol. XLIII, No. 255, p. 1, col. 6.

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a half years in State prison. In 1859 he was found guilty in the Court of General Sessions of grand larceny and was sentenced to three years in Sing Sing. When he came back from Sing Sing about two years ago, he desired readmission and offered to pay his money as before. He was informed that he had been expelled. He wrote a letter to the congregation, begging to be readmitted and threatening, if refused, to seek a legal remedy. The secretary of the congregation told him that if he waited two or three years he would be readmitted if he behaved right and if he went to court, the congregation would have to oppose him. The congregation allowed him and his wife to worship in seats assigned by the board of trustees and would allow him and his wife to be buried in the cemetery plot belonging to the Congregation in Cyprus Hills., but the Congregation positively refused to accept him as a member or take any money from him until he showed that he had become a better man. He sued about 3 months ago. The Congregation refused his money on the grounds that it was probably received from a wrongful source. The Congregation was concerned that he would reflect ill on it because of prevailing anti-Semitism. Judge J. F. Daly was not sure if Greenthal could be deprived of his property rights by expulsion but that his certificate of membership stated that the seats were held “subject to the resolutions of the Board of Trustees” and so there is no doubt about the matter. “Certainly a very large majority of the Congregation would leave it at once if a man like Greenthal were permitted to retain his membership in it.”

Mr. Greenthal is absent from the city, but his daughter Rachel said, “My father was one of the charter members of the congregation of Israel Bikur Cholim. Of the charter members who united with him in 1855 in its organization in 1855, only three out of twenty-five, I believe, are still living. He has never been behind hand in any due or voluntary offering for charity in the congregation. He is a very religious man. I know that he has been in trouble, but when they talk of his repentance and living a better life, they had better turn the church right around and have everybody in it do a great deal of repentance. I know of members who are “fences”—plenty of them. There is Mr. —, and Mr. —,” [Sei ruhig, mein kind,” spoke up old Mrs. Greenthal from her bed, “du musst die namen nich sachen.”]⁶⁰ “Well, all right, but they must not attack my father. My papa was a religious man. When he was in Sing Sing he got up a congregation there, and they celebrated the Jewish New Year’s. They prayed and sang and fasted all day, and then every one gave something for the poor. Papa gave two dollars, others a dollar, some fifty cents and some ten cents, just what everybody could. Then the question came, Who was the poor? No Jew present would admit being poor, because each had given something, and each felt that as long as he had something to give away there was somebody else poorer than he was. So they gave it all to the Major, who kept door for them. It is not only our right to

⁶⁰ “Be quiet, my child ... You must not reveal the names.”—translated by the author.

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our place in the synagogue, for which papa contends. To be deprived of that would be a great hardship, for we have gone there for years.” [Mrs. Greenthal—“I will always go there until I die. I cannot go anywhere else than there, where I have worshiped so long.”] “It is true they offer us another place, a less valuable one, that they may sell our old seat, but then all would point to us and say, “Mr. Greenthal was turned out of his seat because he has been in Sing Sing.” But, we could stand even that, if it were not that in giving our right to our place in the synagogue we would at the same time give up our place in the burial ground of the congregation, where my little brother and my grandmother are laid.” [Mrs. Greenthal—Oh, I cannot give up my right to lie where my dead lie buried.] “Why, if they find so much fault with papa now, did they not expel him when he was in trouble in 1859? Then they did not say a word. Even when he was in Sing Sing, they took money from us—this last time—and never told us they had expelled him until he came back and wanted his old seat in the synagogue, which they had been letting to others during all the time of his absence.” Mr. Greenthal’s counsel was Mr. Stuart.⁶¹

Even a Georgia weekly newspaper became interested in the story. It noted that the General was expelled because an article appeared in the newspaper indicating that he had been a bad man in this country and in Europe. He went to Sing Sing for three years in 1859. Abraham Greenthal said that he was a charter member of Beth Israel Bikur Cholim for 21 years. The burial ground is in Cypress Hills. The few older members support him. He held a place of honor as far back as 1859 when they knew he had been a bad man. He was expelled only after he became poor.⁶²

At this same time according to the New York City Directory, Abraham Greenthal lived at 39 Rutgers Street, between Cherry and Madison Streets, and was a peddler.

The defendant answered on Tuesday, 6 June 1876, by the Congregation President, Jacob Bennett.⁶³ The case was set for trial on Monday, 19 June, before Judge Van Hoesen.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Sunday, 28 May 1876, p. 2, col. 6.

⁶² Tuesday, 6 June 1876, *Georgia Weekly Telegraph*, *Macon Weekly Telegraph*, Macon, GA, Vol. LXIX, Issue 42, p. 5, col. 5.

⁶³ In the records of the New York County Clerk, http://www.courts.state.ny.us/supctmanh/county_clerk_records.htm/. The details of the answer are as related at trial.

⁶⁴ Monday, 19 June 1876, *New York Times*, p. 3, col. 4. Court Calendar—Common Pleas—Equity Term, Van Hoesen, J. 20 Greenthal v. The Congregation B. I. B. C. For a biography

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In the only known mention of Abraham Greenthal in the Jewish press, *The American Israelite* carried a story by the New York correspondent of the *Toledo Blade*, in which he seems to have taken a cynical attitude toward the Congregation while not forgiving The General. He appears to say that the Congregation would forgive The General while he was rich but not now that he is poor.⁶⁵

Two and a half months before the case was tried, Abraham’s wife Hannah died on Sunday, 3 September 1876.⁶⁶ She was buried in Salem Fields Cemetery on Tuesday, 5 September 1876,⁶⁷ in the unmapped Beth Israel Section. Thus, before the trial even began, Abraham knew that the synagogue members would honor its promise to bury his wife in their cemetery plot for members of the Congregation, the same ground where his son Isaac was buried. See n. 7.

The case was first set down for trial on Friday, 24 November,⁶⁸ but was not, in fact, tried until Tuesday, 28 November, before Judge Van Brunt.⁶⁹

with a portrait of Judge George M. Van Hoesen of the New York City Court of Common Pleas, see <http://civilwarnotebook.blogspot.com/2010/08/hon-george-m-van-hoesen.html/>.

⁶⁵ 6 June 1876, Cincinnati, OH, Vol. XXVI, No. 1149, New Series, Vol. IV, No. 23, p. 2, col. 5. There is no indication that the article appeared in the *Toledo Blade*.

⁶⁶ She is listed on Manhattan death certificate 247433 as Hana Grünthal, age 46, residing at 39 Rutgers Street, 7th Ward, 3 family dwelling, first floor. Her unnamed parents are listed as having been from Prussia. She is listed as having been buried on 4 September although the cemetery records indicate that burial was the next day. She is correctly listed as having been in the United States for 25 years. The primary cause of death was Polyarthrititis Rheumatica while the secondary cause was Bronchitis pulmoniae.

⁶⁷ Hannah was buried on 16 Elul 5636, listed as age 46, from Manhattan. The grave was not found at Salem Fields Cemetery, Brooklyn; no extent marker, but the information is listed on a card in the cemetery office, stating that Hannah is buried in the Beth Israel cemetery plot.

⁶⁸ Court Calendar—Common Pleas—Equity Term, Van Brunt, J. 29—Greenthal v. The Congregation B. I. B. C. Friday, 24 November 1876, *New York Times*, p. 3, col. 4. For a biography with a photograph of Charles H. van Brunt, see <http://www.courts.state.ny.us/courts/ad1/centennial/Bios/chvanbrunt.shtml/>.

⁶⁹ Court Calendar—Common Pleas—Equity Term, Van Brunt, J. 29—Greenthal v. The Congregation B. I. B. C. Tuesday, 28 November 1876, *New York Times*, p. 3, col. 3.

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The case was indeed tried on Tuesday, 28 November 1876. Judgment was for the defendant synagogue on the merits with costs of \$111.06 on the grounds that the plaintiff was a convicted felon of bad moral character and served out his terms of imprisonment on more than one occasion in State Prison.

As reported in the morning newspapers on the following morning, “the suit against the Congregation Beth Israel Bikur Cholim to compel them to reinstate Abraham Greenthal, who has served out a term in State Prison, in possession of a pew in their synagogue, was tried yesterday before Judge Van Brunt, in Common Pleas, Special Term. On Greenthal’s behalf it was insisted that he has a vested right in the pew and has always been ready to pay the rent for the pew. The congregation claims that they have never refused to allow him to worship in the synagogue, but they are unwilling to receive stolen money and without the reception of the rent by them his right in the pew ceases. Judge Van Brunt reserved his decision.”⁷⁰

As a result of the proceedings just discussed, the case was fully concluded on Friday, 22 December 1876, by an order signed by the Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas for the City and County of New York, stating that Judge van Brunt dismissed the complaint upon the merits of the case with costs (charged to the plaintiff., Abraham Greenthal) in the amount of \$111.06.⁷¹

The *New York Tribune* saw it as “Refusing a Criminal’s Money.” In the suit of Abraham Greenthal against the Congregation Beth Israel Bikur Cholim, Judge Van Brunt, in Common Pleas, Special Term, has given his decision. Greenthal owned sittings in the synagogue, but in 1859 and 1873 was convicted of grand larceny, and served out two terms. The congregation expelled him, but after his release offered him the use of seats, not as a member but for worship. Greenthal brought this action to compel the congregation to accept him as a member. Judge Van Brunt says: “I don’t think any authority can be produced, or that any court will ever decide, that a religious society is bound to continue as a member a man who has been convicted of a felony, nor that they are bound to receive

⁷⁰ Wednesday, 29 November 1876, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 2, col. 5. See also Tuesday, 12 December 1876, *New York Times*, p. 3, col. 7. “A Convict’s Rights in a Church;” the same day, *New York Herald*, p. 8, col. 3. Common Pleas—Equity Term. By Judge Van Brunt; and Tuesday, 12 December 1876, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Vol. 37, No . 294, p. 2, col. 4. The Thursday, 28 December 1876, *The Inquirer*, New York, “Jottings,” Vol. XXXII, No 4, Whole No. 1574, p. 77, col. 2, praised the Congregation for its stance.

⁷¹ In the records of the New York County Clerk, http://www.courts.state.ny.us/supctmanh/county_clerk_records.htm/.

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as contributions toward the support of their church that which may be the proceeds of a felony.” He finds that the only remedy for plaintiff, if he is wronged, is a suit for damages, and dismisses his complaint.⁷²

Even a London newspaper thought the case worthy of note, adding what today would be an anti-Semitic slant to its analysis.

Full of precedents as are our law books, we doubt if there is one which would apply to a case that lately occurred in the State of New York. We may premise that the English Common Law is the basis of the jurisprudence of each American State, and that thus the same great principles underlie the administration of justice to both halves of this Anglo-Saxon family. The statute law, of course, differs in each State, according to its peculiar circumstances. One Abraham Greenthal had been a member of a congregation of Israelites, known as Bikur Cholim. He committed felony twice, and served two terms of imprisonment, amounting to three years, in the state prison. On his release he sought readmission to membership of his synagogue, the Jewish rulers whereof said he might come and pray, but not pay; in other words, they would not obstruct him in such religious offices as any sincere penitent may offer to the Almighty, but they would not rehabilitate him as an honest Jew entitled to share in the government and support of his community. Some people might suppose that society would be benefited if the Jewish conscience was more tender still, and excluded from the highest religious privileges such men as we read of in the law reports now and then, who demand and receive thirty, forty, and even sixty per-cent, for temporary accommodation. Unfortunately, the Jew, ignoring the spirit of his own law, which reproves “greedy gain by extortion,” takes refuge in its letter, which permits him to lend upon usury to a stranger while it forbids it to his “brother.” At any rate it is satisfactory to know that a Jew draws the line somewhere, and that line is—two convictions for felony. Greenthal appealed to the law and the Judge decided against him, on the ground that no religious society was bound to receive in its aid what might be the produce of a robbery. So the moral stain remains upon the man for life, and the only thing he is allowed to pay for is the costs of the synagogue in resisting him in the court.⁷³

⁷² Tuesday, 12 December 1876, Vol. XXXVI, No. 11,140, p. 2, col. 6. See also Saturday, 16 December 1876, *Troy Daily Times*, Troy, NY, Vol. XXVI, No. 148, p. 2, col. 4.

⁷³ Friday, 29 December 1876, *The Echo*, London [United Kingdom], No. 2,504, p. 1, cols. 5 and 6.

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Abraham had no intention of what was euphemistically called “living quietly” as he knew no other method of earning a living than theft. He was arrested again in 1877, and his mugshot taken and placed in a rogues gallery, along with that of his brother, arrested at the same time.⁷⁴ As Thomas Byrnes, the first New York City Chief of Detectives, wrote in his book on the subject, “The ‘General’ was arrested in Rochester, N. Y., on March 1, 1877, in company of his brother, Harris, and Samuel Casper, his son-in-law, for robbing a man ..., and sentenced on April 19, 1877, to twenty years in Auburn, N. Y., State prison.”⁷⁵

Wednesday, 29 February 1877, was the day that The General, his brother, calling himself Herman Brown, and Samuel Casper, arrived in Rochester, New York, by train. The following day the pickpockets were seen leaping off a train for Niagara Falls, followed by a man shouting, “Stop Thief.” The latter was identified as a William Jinkman, but reported in the Rochester newspapers as “Ginkman.” The thieves disappeared with \$1,190, taken from Jinkman’s inside pocket, which held a pocketbook. Later that day the accused were arrested, but the money not recovered.⁷⁶

The following day an article appeared in the same newspaper, stating that the names of the men arrested were Samuel Casper, Herman Brown, and Abram Meyer. They were still in jail, not having yet been examined in the Police court. The police claimed to have sufficient evidence to warrant their being held for the Grand Jury, although the money had not been recovered.⁷⁷

Another Rochester newspaper reported that same day that the previous morning there was a robbery at the Central depot. A poor German, William Ginkman, with his wife and child were traveling on the train from Boston and headed for Dubuque, Iowa. In changing from this train to the one going west, the man was pushed by a number of men very violently and discovered upon taking his seat

⁷⁴ See Byrnes, Thomas, *1886 Professional Criminals of America*. Mugshots and writeups of Abraham and Harris Greenthal, entries and mugshots 152 and 153, respectively. <http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924096989177#page/n299/mode/2up/>, see especially pp. 39, 157, and 224-226.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁷⁶ Thursday, 1 March 1877, *Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser*, Vol. 52, No. 51, p. 2, col. 3, “Heavy Robbery.” There is a brief reference to the “Greenthal gang” in this context in an article about “Joe” Parish” in an article in the Sunday, 24 March 1889 *Sunday Herald*, Syracuse, NY, entitled “Three of a Kind,” Vol. 10, No. 459, p. 5, cols. 3-4, at col. 3. There is no evidence that this person is the same as Casper Parris. See Monday, 7 May 1894 *Syracuse Standard*, Syracuse, New York, p. 4, col. 6, identifying the person arrested with General Greenthal as Joe Parish.

⁷⁷ Friday, 2 March 1877, *Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser*, Vol. 52, No. 52, p. 2, col. 2, “The Railroad Pickpockets.”

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in the train that his wallet was missing. He went to the platform of the car in time to see one of the men, a large one, running through the depot at top speed. The man gave the alarm but not in time to prevent the thief’s escape. Detectives were aware of the gang for a year or more and had heard that morning that the gang was in Rochester at that time. The detectives had photographs of the gang members. The three members were arrested within half an hour of the robbery. The victim identified the three as the guilty parties. One of the detectives recognized two of the three men, Abraham and Herman Brown, ages 59 and 56 years old, of New York City, as leading members of the Sheeny Gang, and all three were locked up. There were five members who crowded the victim, and those not apprehended must have the money as none was recovered. In an interview with Abraham Brown, a reporter for the newspaper indicated that the prisoners’ stores are contradictory and wholly unsubstantiated. Abraham Brown, the older one, indicated that he does not know either of the other two prisoners and has no relatives in the area. He claims ignorance of the robbery and maintains his innocence. Herman Brown, not knowing what Abraham had said, claims to be Abraham’s half-brother, coming together from New York City. They are Germans by birth but of Hebrew descent. He says that the detectives know their records so well that denials will be of little weight. Caspar is also an Israelite but younger, age 28.⁷⁸

We do not hear of the matter again until the trial of Abram Meyers and Herman Brown in the Court of Sessions on the morning of Monday, 9 April 1877,⁷⁹ Judge [Jerome] Fuller⁸⁰ presiding. In an article on the case, the victim is called William Gendricks of Waltham, Massachusetts. Only Abraham and Herman are on trial with the trial of Lemuel [*sic*] Caspar to occur later. The money has still not been recovered. A Depot policeman, a city alderman, and the Assistant Depot Master all testified to seeing the prisoners around the depot, acting suspiciously previous to the robbery. The victim also testified as to the facts, positively identifying the two accused on trial, saying that one of the two on trial forced open his vest and took the money before running away. The trial was still in progress at the time of the report.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Friday, 2 March 1877, *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, Vol. 45, No. 53, p. 4, col. 4, “Pickpockets.”

⁷⁹ Tuesday, 10 April 1877, *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, Vol. 45, No. 85, p. 4, col. 8, “Legal Record ... Court of Sessions,” announcing the trial of “The People v. Herman Brown and Abram Meyer. Robbery first degree. On trial.”

⁸⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome_Fuller

⁸¹ Monday, 9 April 1877, *Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser*, Vol. 52, No. 84, p. 2, col. 6, “The Depot Robbery.”

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With Judge Fuller presiding and Associate Justices [John] Borst and [Napoleon B.] Jones⁸² on the bench, the trial of the “Sheeny Gang” began on 9 April 1877 with Herman Brown and Abram Meyers on trial. The third defendant would be tried separately soon thereafter. All three were charged with stealing \$1,190 from the pocket of William Gendricks at the central depot on Thursday, 1 March 1877. Several witnesses established that all three of the accused were at the depot when the crime took place and had been on the same train as the victim. Meyers admitted that he had been arrested for similar offenses in the past but firmly maintained his innocence of all such crimes. He claimed to have no knowledge of the movements or intentions of the other two prisoners. The defense evidence was somewhat contradictory. Their counsel maintained that the case might be one of mistaken identity. Judge Fuller will charge the jury the next morning.⁸³

On Tuesday, 10 April 1877, the case was submitted to the jury after Judge Fuller summed up the case. The jury was out only a few moments and returned with a verdict of guilty as indicted. At this announcement, Mrs. Caspar, the daughter of Meyers, elevated her voice to a hideous shriek or howl, throwing herself upon the floor. After being carried out by several officers, she suddenly became submissive. It is thought she intended to create an excitement in the court room, when her father and the other prisoners might succeed in sliding out in a quiet manner.⁸⁴

The trial of Brown and Myers, charged with robbing William Gendricks of \$1,190, continued yesterday afternoon, and concluded this morning. The jury was absent for about half an hour and returned with a verdict of guilty. A daughter of Myers [*sic*], who is also wife to Samuel Caspar, also held for alleged participation in the crime, was present when the verdict was rendered, and immediately uttered a series of screams and fell on the floor. She was carried out by attendants and continued to exclaim that her father was not guilty. The penalty imposed by the law for the offense of which they have been convicted is imprisonment for at least ten years. It is said that Meyers, under the alias of Greenthal, has passed about 25 years of his life in prison, and that it is but a short time since he was liberated from Auburn prison, where he had served three years. The trial of Caspar, it is expected, will begin tomorrow.⁸⁵

On Thursday, Caspar was tried separately and also convicted. A motion for postponement of

⁸² See *Rochester Directory ...*, Rochester: Drew, Allis & Co., Vol. XXVIII, 1877, <http://www.libraryweb.org/rochcitydir/images/1877/1877complete.pdf>, p. 488.

⁸³ Tuesday, 10 April 1877, *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, Vol. 45, No. 85, p.4, col. 6, “Court of Sessions.”

⁸⁴ Wednesday, 11 April 1877, *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, Vol. 45, No. 86, pp. 4, col. 6, “Found Guilty.”

⁸⁵ Tuesday, 19 April 1877, *Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser*, Vol. 52, No. 83, p. 2, col. 5, “Court of Sessions.”

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sentence was denied by the Court, and the prisoners were then called up separately for sentence. Myers stated that he was 52 years of age, born in Germany, a peddler, could read and write Hebrew and had religious instruction in Hebrew. The others gave the same answers except as to age, Herman Harris Brown being 56 years old and Samuel Caspar being 29 years old. Meyers stated in court that he was “honest and innocent” and asked if it was probable that he would go to a hotel where he was arrested half an hour later if had committed the crime. Rather he would have left town. One of the detectives, who had known him for 16 years, told him that they were after the right party and had gone to Cleveland to get him.⁸⁶ The detective had told Meyers that he was innocent. The Court replied that it did not believe his statement and regarded him as the head of the gang. He was then sentenced to twenty years at hard labor in Auburn State Prison. Brown stated that he did not understand English well but was innocent. He was sentenced to eighteen years in Auburn. Casper stated his relation to the Meyer family, whose real name was Greenthal. Casper was also sentenced to imprisonment in Auburn for fifteen years. The article then relates that Meyers is an old offender and that his statement that he was never before convicted is flat perjury. He was in Auburn Prison in 1874 and was released because of a flaw in the indictment. He used to live about twenty miles from New York and his means of support is said to have been robbery on the trains between Jersey city and Paterson. He was a notorious thief and won the title of “General.”⁸⁷

On the morning of Thursday, 19 April 1877, the Sheeny Gang prisoners were brought into court for sentencing. Mr. Hovey,⁸⁸ counsel for the defense, moved to suspend sentence to give him time to

⁸⁶ This statement raised some doubt about the ethics of the detective and some others in the Rochester Police Department. District Attorney Raines [See Peck, William Farley, *History of Rochester and Monroe County, New York: From the Earliest Historic Times to the Beginning of 1907*, New York and Chicago: The Pioneer Publishing Company, 1908, Vol. II, pp. 1064 and 1067. Library of Congress Microfilm 22826 F and http://books.google.com/books?id=ivssAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA1064&lpg=PA1064&dq=George+Raines+prosecutor+Rochester+1877&source=bl&ots=msvNonkHM7&sig=smcVuv_KSNBrgbMo2_H0V8I9Hek&hl=en&sa=X&ei=hWsoT_Dz/] testified at an inquiry which ultimately exonerated the police officers. Although the word “bribery” was never used, the implication that bribery of policemen by these defendants was the underlying allegation is inescapable. See Friday, 20 April 1877 *Rochester Union and Advertiser*, Vol. 52, No. 94, p. 2, col. 1; Saturday, 21 April 1877 *Ibid.*, Vol. 52, No. 95, p. 2, col. 3, “Serious Charges against Policemen;” Tuesday, 24 April 1877, *Ibid.*, Vol. 52, No. 97, p. 2, col. 6, “Police Matters;” and Friday, 27 April 1877, *Ibid.*, Vol. 52, No. 100, p. 2, col. 3, “Police Investigation.”

⁸⁷ Thursday, 19 April 1877, *Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser*, Vol. 52, No. 93, p. 2, col. 5, “The Depot Robbery.”

⁸⁸ Luther H. Hovey, *Rochester Directory*, Vol. 22, <http://books.google.com/books?id=JF8DAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA41-IA4&dq=Jero+me+Fuller+Court+of+Sessions+New+York+Brockport&hl=en&sa=X&ei=F38qT4o24ovY>

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submit a motion for a new trial in Caspar's case. After much discussion by both sides, Judge Fuller decided not to grant the motion because the evidence favored the people's case. He then sentenced the prisoners. Abraham Meyers, alias Greenthal, was sentenced to twenty years at hard labor in Auburn, while Herman Harris Brown was sentenced to eighteen years at hard labor in Auburn and Samuel Caspar was sentenced to fifteen years in Auburn. All of the prisoners were quite agitated with Caspar telling how he came to marry Abraham Greenthal's daughter and subsequent circumstances.⁸⁹

Abraham was again in prison when his youngest daughter Mary married on Tuesday, 21 May 1878,⁹⁰ in Manhattan. She is listed as Mary Leslau while the groom is listed as Solomon Moses, son of Kealay Moses and Julia Davis. She is listed as the daughter of Abraham Leslau and Hannah Davis.⁹¹

At the end of 1879, The General was in prison. Had he been in New York City, he might have enjoyed the première of the only Gilbert and Sullivan operetta to have its première in the United States.

“A policeman's lot is not a happy one.”
(William Schwenk Gilbert / Sir Arthur Sullivan)

Choral refrain in parentheses

When a felon's not engaged in his employment (his employment)
Or maturing his felonious little plans (little plans)
His capacity for innocent enjoyment ('cent enjoyment)
Is just as great as any honest man's (honest mans)
Our feelings we with difficulty smother ('culty smother)
When constabulary duty's to be done (to be done)
Ah, take one consideration with another (with another)
A policeman's lot is not a happy one
Ahhh when constabulary duty's to be done, to be done,

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⁸⁹ Friday, 20 April 1877 *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, Vol. 45, No. 94, p. 4, col. 5, “The Sheeny Gang Sentenced.”

⁹⁰ The New York City vital records indicate the date as Thursday, 14 February 1878. The Manhattan marriage certificate is listed as number 499.

⁹¹ See Family History Library [Mormon] microfilm 1562247.

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A policeman’s lot is not a happy one.

When the enterprising burglars not a’burgling (not a’burgling)
When the cut throat isn’t occupied in crime (‘pied in crime)
He loves to hear the little brook a’gurgling (brook a’gurgling)
And listen to the merry village chime (village chime)
When the coster’s finished jumping on his mother (on his mother)
He loves to lie a’basking in the sun (in the sun)
Ah, take one consideration with another (with another)
A policeman’s lot is not a happy one
Ahhh when constabulary duty’s to be done, to be done,
A policeman’s lot is not a happy one (happy one).⁹²

The 1880 Federal Census for New York shows that on 23 June, Abraham Meyers was in Auburn State Prison on Hale Street, Auburn, NY.⁹³ The entry lists him as a white male, age 54, prison convict, widower, peddler, can read and write English, born in Prussia of parents both born in Prussia.

⁹² *The Pirates of Penzance, or The Slave of Duty*, was first performed at the Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York City on Wednesday, 31 December 1879. Take one consideration with another, had he not been in prison, the General might well have enjoyed the show. See http://books.google.com/books?id=4iYQAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA1&dq='Pirates+of+Penzance'+libretto&hl=en&ei=eeInTInvCYL68Aak2-i9Dw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAQ/.

⁹³ Supervisor’s District No. 8, Enumeration District 5, 289, page 59, line 21. 4th Ward of Auburn, County of Cayuga.

Chapter 8 The Father of the Thieving Fraternity (1882-1889)

While the General was in prison, he did not attract much attention until 1884. However, we find Emanuel Cortez, the expert forger and jailbreaker, again in the news in 1882 in connection with the Greenthal household where he was arrested in 1873 while a lodger there. He was returned to prison at that time.¹ In fact, as the earlier article notes, he was actually arrested on Tuesday, 22 October 1872.²

In an article on other matters, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* referred to “General” Greenthal as the “Father of the Thieving Fraternity.”³

All of the time that the General was in prison, two of his four daughters were working diligently to obtain his freedom from prison and were supported by the other two daughters. As detailed in the *Sun*, under the headline, “The Pardon of Myers. His Daughters Labor for Seven Years to Get Him Out of Prison. Syracuse, May 23,” Abraham Myers was sentenced in 1877 in Rochester to twenty years’ confinement in Auburn prison for burglary. His daughters, Mrs. Evans and Mrs. Casper of East Twenty-third street, New York, have never relaxed their efforts to procure a pardon for him. Gov. Robinson and Gov. Cornell were importuned throughout their respective terms, but they each withstood the pleadings of the sisters and refused to pardon the convict. With Gov. Cleveland’s accession to office the effort was renewed, and on Wednesday he issued a pardon and gave it to one of Myers’s daughters, who was so overcome that she fell on the floor in a swoon. Both of the women repaired immediately to the prison, where they refused to give the pardon to the warden, but insisted on placing it in their father’s hands, which they did. Yesterday the old man was released, and they all started for New York. Next week Myers will go to Utah to spend the rest of his life with his sister who lives there.⁴

Mrs. Casper is clearly Mollie, and Mrs. Evans is Rachel. The General had a sister, Eva Hannah, married to Moses C. Phillips, a cigar merchant in Salt Lake City. The file containing the application for a pardon contains a letter dated 18 January 1884 in which Hannah Phillips wrote to The

¹ See Chapter 5, n. 26.

² Monday, 17 April 1882 *New York Herald*, p. 4, col. 2.

³ Friday, 7 July 1882, p. 2, col. 5. Cortez was captured at Greenthal’s house and sent to prison for four and a half years, disappearing after his release. The article details his career and recent arrest.

⁴ New York, Saturday, 24 May 1884, p. 1, col. 2.

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General's daughter Francis [*sic*] that she would care for him in Salt Lake City "for the rest of his days." She expresses the opinion that he will never wish to return to New York City.⁵

Despite what the headline indicated, The General was not "pardoned." Rather, his sentence was commuted. So he remained a convicted criminal but was out of prison.

The entry in the prison records makes clear that the order issued is a commutation and not a pardon. "Convict found guilty in Monroe County, NY on 19 April 1877 of robbery n the first degree and sentenced to 20 years in Auburn State Prison. Sentence commuted to seven years and one month from 21 April 1877 until 20 May 1884. Issued by Governor Grover Cleveland on 16 May 1884."⁶ Grover Cleveland's papers also mention the commutation. "Commutation dated 16 May 1884.

⁵ New York State Archives, Record Group A0597, Box 31, Folder 12. The folder contains an Application for Pardon cover sheet for Abraham Meyers. The pardon application was denied on Wednesday, 26 September 1883, but granted as a commutation on Friday, 16 May 1884. The application was first presented on Thursday, 8 February 1883, by Mrs. R. C. Evans, 313 Broome Street, New York City. It was renewed on Friday, 25 February 1884, by the Hon. Michael Norton, New York City; see <http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/norton.html>. The cover sheet cross-references the cases of Casper and Brown, reports of which are contained in the file, along with a Friday, 16 May 1884, letter to the Warden of Auburn Prison, informing him of the Governor's decision and indicating that an authorized agent would present the Warden with a copy of the commutation of sentence; and contains a copy of the Warden's Tuesday, 20 May 1884, acknowledgment of receipt of the warrant and indicating that Meyers had been discharged. The file also contains a Saturday, 19 January 1884, letter from Howe & Hummel to "Miss Rachel Greenthal," stating that the firm believed in her father's innocence in 1871 and discussing why he pled guilty to that earlier charge; a 15 February 1883 letter from former Monroe County District Attorney George Raines, explaining to the Governor the reason for the long prison sentences and why he and the late judge who sentenced Meyers would not object to shortening the prison sentence; and the Warden's Thursday, 22 February 1883, report on Meyer's incarceration, indicating that he had been in the same prison before for 11 months; a Saturday, 16 February 1884 letter, signed by Mrs. Frances Aaron of 393 Grand Street, Mrs. Mary Keeley of 22 Norfolk Street, and Mrs. Ray Evens of 313 Broome Street, all of New York City and addressed to Governor Cleveland, stating that they are his daughters and that Abraham Myers will leave New York and live with his sister in Salt Lake City for the rest of his life, never to return to New York. That letter is enclosed in a Sunday, 18 February 1884, letter from William G. Irving, stating that Myers intends to leave the state for the rest of his life, living in Salt Lake City with his sister; and undated statements by Rochester police officers Kavanagh and Fickett claiming that Meyers was not the guilty party.

⁶ New York State Archives, Record Group B0048, New York (State). Dept. of State, Respites and commutations, 1854-1931, Friday, May 16, 1884, Commutation of Sentence, Vol. 2, p. 31.

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Abraham Meyers was sentenced on Thursday, 19 April 1877 in Monroe County [Rochester, NY] for the crime of robbery in the first degree to a term of 20 years and sent to Auburn State Prison. His sentence is commuted to seven years and one month from Saturday, 21 April 1877 to Tuesday, 20 May 1884. He has served within one to two days of 11 years and has maintained good conduct in prison. Both the district attorney and the deceased judge who sentenced him supported the commutation. The convict is old and in feeble health. He has near relatives in the West who will provide for him there.⁷

Not five months after having been released from prison, The General was arrested again. “General” Abraham Greenthal, who was arrested on Wednesday by Detective O’Connor on suspicion of receiving stolen goods, was discharged by Police Justice O’Reilly⁸ yesterday, as there was no complaint made against him.⁹

So, undeterred, The General moved his usual *modus operandi* to New Jersey. We first hear about some unknown thieves committing robberies in the railroad depot in Jersey City, New Jersey. There were three reported cases of passengers having been robbed by pickpockets in the Pennsylvania depot. The thieves appear to have had selected hours when travel was heaviest. The victims were Mr. E. Fuller, robbed of a gold watch valued at \$850 while about to board a train to Philadelphia the previous Saturday morning; a few hours later a lady residing in New York was robbed of a valuable diamond breastpin; and the latest victim, Louis Pressler, a saloon keeper doing business at No. 254 Stanton Street, New York, who mourns the loss of \$65 in bills, which were cleverly stolen from his vest pocket the morning of the day previous to the newspaper report’s appearance.¹⁰

⁷ Cleveland, Grover, *Public Papers of Grover Cleveland, Governor*, Albany: The Argus Company, printers, 1883-1884. 2 volumes in 1, Vol. I, 1883, 208 pp., including index, pp. 205-208; and Vol. II, 1884, 345 pp., including index, pp. 339-345. J87.N717 1883-1884. See pp. 320-321. Dated Friday, 16 May 1884.

⁸ Daniel J. O’Reilly; see Smith, Frank Charles *et al.*, eds., *The American Lawyer: A Monthly Journal Serving the Business and Professional Interests of the American Bar*, New York: Stumpf & Steurer, Vol. 1, No. 8, August 1893, p. 21; K1 .M4479 and [http://books.google.com/books?id=G-0KAQAAMAAJ&pg=RA3-PA21&lpg=RA3-PA21&dq=%22Police+Justice%22+named+O’Reilly+%22New+York+city%22&source=bl&ots=7C7AHcaNtR&sig=2LnX_44Mwu0Hk0CQleMYLgCQMdk&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ASIVt9mKN-eV0QGu263vCg&sqi=2&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=O’Reilly&f=false/](http://books.google.com/books?id=G-0KAQAAMAAJ&pg=RA3-PA21&lpg=RA3-PA21&dq=%22Police+Justice%22+named+O%27Reilly+%22New+York+city%22&source=bl&ots=7C7AHcaNtR&sig=2LnX_44Mwu0Hk0CQleMYLgCQMdk&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ASIVt9mKN-eV0QGu263vCg&sqi=2&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=O%27Reilly&f=false/).

⁹ Friday, 24 October 1884, *New York Herald*, p. 6, col. 6.

¹⁰ Thursday, 4 December 1884 *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, New Jersey, Vol. XVIII, No. 183, p. 1, col. 1: “Robbed at the Depot.”

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Less than a week later, The General was arrested. Abraham Leslie, *alias* General Greenthal, the oldest pickpocket in the country, was arrested on a warrant issued by Judge Robinson of Jersey City,¹¹ charging him with pickpocketing. Leslie's counsel claimed that the complainant failed to identify the prisoner so there were no grounds to hold him in order to have extradition. Justice White¹² disagreed and remanded the prisoner until this morning. The prisoner's counsel issued the detective with a writ of *habeas corpus*.¹³ The name "Leslie" may have come from another criminal by that surname and bears a resemblance to the name of the Betsche criminal family Leßlauer, Abraham's original surname in the eyes of the Prussian authorities.

A New Jersey newspaper provided details of the actual robbery. Last Tuesday L. Pressler, a saloon keeper, doing business at 204 Stanton Street, New York City, when about to take a train at the Pennsylvania [railroad] depot, was relieved of his pocketbook containing \$50. The thief pushed against his victim, but Pressler was able to see his features. Two detectives were notified, which resulted in the suspicion that the thief was Abraham Lesler, alias "General Greenthal," who was in the depot just prior to the robbery, and also on the previous Saturday, when Mr. Fuller lost his \$350 gold watch. The detectives of Inspector Byrnes of New York captured the "General" this morning. Lesler is about 63 years of age and was once a leading spirit of the swell mob, and one of the most noted pickpockets and sneak thieves in the country. He has not been heard from recently, perhaps spending time in prison under an assumed name. Mr. Pressler and a detective went to New York

¹¹ Gilbert P. Robinson; see Wednesday, 24 September 1884 *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 2; <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=FB0F13F6385C15738DDDAD0A94D1405B8484F0D3/>. See also McLean, Alexander, *History of Jersey City: A Record of Its Early Settlement and Corporate Progress*, Jersey City: Press of the Jersey City Printing Company, 1895, 460 pp. See pp. 132-133, with photograph, p. 132. F144.J5 M16 FT MEADE and <http://www.archive.org/stream/historyofjerseyc00macl#page/n5/mode/2up/>; and Costello, Augustine E., *History of the Police Department of Jersey City: From the reign of the Knickerbockers to the Present Day*, Jersey City N. J.: A. E. Costello, 1891, 428 pp. See pp. 254-255. <http://books.google.com/books?id=tE5IAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=History+of+Jersey+City&hl=en&sa=X&ei=01o8T--fFqji0QGHwdHNCw&ved=0CEIQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=History%20of%20Jersey%20City&f=false/>. See also p. 49 of Honeyman, Abraham Van Doren, *comp., Directory of the Members of the Bar in Practice in New Jersey: Also of the Justices of the Peace and State Officers*, Somerville, NJ: Honeyman & Company, 1888, 64 pp. Microfilm LL 1101 KF.

¹² Police Justice Andrew J. White; see Monday, 26 October 1885 *New York Times*, p. 8, col. 2; <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=FB0A15FE395B10738DDDAF0A94D8415B8584F0D3/>.

¹³ Wednesday, 10 December 1884, *New York Times*, p. 5, col. 2.

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City this afternoon to identify the prisoner and to have him held until his case is laid before the Grand Jury.¹⁴

Winding Up a Long Career and Noted Pickpocket Captured—Abraham Lester, alias “Gen. Greenthal,” whose capture in New York by Inspector Byrnes’ detectives was noted yesterday, has been identified by the Stanton Street saloon keeper whom he robbed in the Pennsylvania depot on the 31st of last month. His case was laid before the Grand Jury yesterday and the inquisition papers to insure his return to our authorities will be promptly procured. The prisoner is over 60 years of age and the most noted of the pickpockets and sneak thieves, and was but recently pardoned from prison by Gov. Cleveland.¹⁵

Another Jersey City newspaper also carried the story. A Noted Pickpocket: The Man Who is Supposed to Have Been Operating in the P. R. R. Depot. On 3 December, L. Pressler of New York City had his pocket picked of \$50 while waiting in the Pennsylvania R. R. Depot. He gave the police a description of the thief, which detectives recognized as that of “General” Greenthal, a noted New York pickpocket. He was the same man in the Depot when another man lost his watch. Chief Murphy communicated the suspicions of the two detectives to Inspector Byrnes in New York and today received a telegraph from Byrnes announcing the arrest of Greenthal. The Chief at once sent a detective over with a warrant to have the prisoner held. Greenthal’s right name is Abraham Lessler. He is 62 years old and a native of Prussia. Fifteen to eighteen years ago he was an active leader of New York thieves and pickpockets, but has been keeping so quiet recently that he was supposed to be either dead or in prison under an assumed name. Chief Murphy will interview Prosecutor Winfield and endeavor to have the prisoner indicted.¹⁶

When the case was finally heard in court, a New York newspaper reported what happened. “General” Greenthal Changes His Mind. “General” Abraham Greenthal, who has been held by the authorities of this city to await a requisition from the Governor of New Jersey, was again before Judge Lawrence in Supreme Court Chambers, upon a writ of *habeas corpus* to-day. The “General” is charged with having, about a week ago, relieved a gentleman of about \$60 while he was standing in the Pennsylvania Railroad Depot in Jersey City. He fled from Jersey only to be caught here and held upon a warrant issued by one of New Jersey’s magistrates. The General refused to go to Jersey until a requisition was procured, and his counsel even then asserted that he would dispute the

¹⁴ Wednesday, 10 December 1884, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, p. 4, col. 5: “Noted Pickpocket Captured.”

¹⁵ Wednesday, 10 December 1884, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, p. 4, col. 3.

¹⁶ Wednesday Afternoon, 10 December 1884, *Jersey City Argus*, Vol. X, No. 259, p. 4, col. 4. This is one of the few instances in which Abraham’s correct age and place of birth are reported in a newspaper.

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identity of the prisoner. In order to give him an opportunity to do this the case had been adjourned until to-day. However, the General, after consultation with his counsel, concluded that he would go to New Jersey, and the writ of habeas corpus was dismissed. An officer from New Jersey then took the General in charge.¹⁷

The General's notoriety and recent prominence in the news triggered an essay which was printed in one newspaper and then reprinted in others. Today we would not give the concept much credence, but in an age of newly popular science, readers were likely to believe it. Hereditary Crime. One of our most incorrigible criminals, Abraham Leslie, known to police as "Gen. Greenthal" is now well on in years—three score and ten. Last May he was "pardoned" out of State Prison after serving 6 of 20 years' imprisonment for robbery. He has now been arrested again for pickpocketing.. All of his family are in the same line of work. He has 3 daughters and 1 son[-in-law]. Two of the daughters are habitual pickpockets, and the third daughter is the wife of a man who keeps a "saloon" in the Bowery. The son is now serving 15 years in the same prison from which his "father" was released.¹⁸

However, only a few days later, news that would have gladdened Abraham appeared upon the horizon. While the news did not directly affect him, it would have given him some pleasure that his brother and son-in-law were freed, just as Abraham had been, by the new Democratic Governor of New York. Herman Brown and Samuel Caspar's sentences were commuted by Governor Cleveland so that they will leave Auburn State prison tomorrow. The *Rochester Herald* says that they are members of the "Sheeney Gang," the leader of whom is Abram Myer, who was pardoned [*sic*] by the Governor several months ago. They had been arrested on 1 March 1877, charged with robbery.¹⁹

¹⁷ Saturday, 13 December 1884, *The Daily Graphic*, New York, Vol. XXXVI, No. 3636, p. 314, col. 3; Saturday, 13 December 1884, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, p. 6, col. 7; and Saturday Afternoon, 13 December 1884, *Jersey City Argus*, Vol. X, No. 262, p. 1, col. 2. [He was released on his own recognizance, however, and never tried. See Saturday, 6 November 1897, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, p. 8, col. 5.]

¹⁸ Sunday, 14 December 1884, *Detroit Free Press*, p. 19, cols. 2-3. Reprinted: Thursday, 15 January 1885, *Trenton Evening Times*, New Jersey, p. 3, col. 4; Thursday, 22 January 1885 *Daily Illinois State Register*, Springfield, IL, p. 4, col. 5; *Sunday Globe-Republic*, Springfield, OH, Vol. IV, No. 158/*The Springfield Republic*, Vol. XXX, No. 258, 25 January 1885, p. 7, col. 8; and *Friendship Weekly Register*, Thursday, 16 April 1885, Friendship, Allegany County, New York, p. 1, col 5.

¹⁹ The Monday, 7 May 1894 *Syracuse Standard*, Syracuse, NY, article, "Faces of the Bad," p. 4, cols. 5-6, and p. 6, col. 5, erroneously alleged that "Gen. Greenthal" was arrested in March 1877 at the station in Syracuse for stealing \$1,190 from Delos S. Johnson of Fabius, NY, while the latter was a passenger on the Binghamton line.

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They had followed the victim from Albany to Rochester and told him at the Central depot that he would have to change trains where they jostled him. The pickpockets were indicted, tried, and convicted. Myers was sentenced to serve 20 years at hard labor in Auburn. Myers was then age 62 [suggesting a birth year of 1815]. He was known all over the country as “General Greenthal, the Sheeny Knouck” and acknowledged as one of the most expert pickpockets in the country. He generally used money to get out of prison where he has been several times.²⁰

The action stirred up the fury of Gov. Cleveland’s hometown newspaper, *The Buffalo Express*. Under the headline “Pardons.” the newspaper specifically criticized Gov. Cleveland for issuing pardons to the members of the Sheeny Gang, among others, calling it a change of policy and a softening of his heart. It calls the Sheeny Gang “unpromising and unworthy candidates,” based upon what was printed about them in the Rochester newspapers.²¹

Meanwhile, Abraham was busy earning a living. He was caught in Jersey City and arraigned as Abram Greenthal on a charge of larceny from the person. He pleaded not guilty.²² For unknown reasons, the same newspaper demoted him from “General” to “Captain,” when it reported, “This morning Captain Abram Grenthal, the notorious New York pickpocket, who has been held in the County Jail for the past few weeks on a charge of larceny from the person, was released [from custody in the Hudson County jail] on his own recognizance, the State not having sufficient proof against him to convict.”²³ The *New York Herald* did not make the same mistake in its report of the discharge.²⁴

The General managed to keep a low profile for some time thereafter, and on Monday, 3 August 1885, he married Rawley Ostrach in Manhattan, listing himself as Abraham Leslau, the son of Isaac Leslau and Leah Davis. The bride was born in Germany and living in Newburgh, New York, at the time of her marriage. Her father was Matthias Ostrach, and her mother was Eva, with no maiden

²⁰ Friday, 19 December 1884, *Auburn News & Bulletin*, Vol. 28, No. 5904, p. 4, col. 3. Just as in Abraham’s case, the two men had their sentences commuted; they were not pardoned.

²¹ Saturday, 20 December 1884, p. 4, col. 1.

²² Saturday, 20 December 1884, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, p. 4, col. 3: Court Proceedings.

²³ Saturday, 3 January 1885, *The Evening Journal*, Jersey City, NJ, Vol. XVIII, No. 207, p. 4, col. 3.

²⁴ Suburban Notes.—“General” Abe Greenthal, the notorious pickpocket, was discharged yesterday from the Hudson county [New Jersey] jail. Sunday, 4 January 1885, p. 11, col. 4.

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name listed.²⁵ Far from being listed as a physician, as Rawley later claimed that he told her, he is listed as a “Manufacturer of lotions” living at 275 Bowery. She is listed as age 21, not 18, as she later claimed, and he is listed as age 54. It was his second marriage and her first one.

However, the honeymoon with the law did not last very long. Abraham Greenthal, the oldest “crook in the country,” was arraigned in the Tombs Police court yesterday morning on a charge of robbery. Inspector Byrnes ordered Greenthal’s arrest, which occurred on Saturday, and he was taken to the Tombs yesterday and subsequently given into the charge of a Brooklyn detective. Greenthal is age 70. Two years ago, while serving 20 years in Sing Sing for receiving stolen bonds, he applied to Governor Cleveland for a pardon on the basis of being very old with only a short time to live and that he would live honestly. He claimed that his friends would support him and a wealthy man of New York City became sponsor for his honesty. He was pardoned. In less than 3 months he was arrested for pickpocketing in the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in Jersey City. He fought the charge and managed to keep out of jail. He has since been arrested several times for thieving and receiving stolen goods but has each time been freed. He was involved in diamond robberies and safe burglaries.²⁶

Another newspaper provided different details of the same event. “Gen.” Abraham Greenthal and Wolf Getz, who were arrested in New-York, charged with \$800 robbery in Brooklyn on 30 December, being arraigned before Justice Naehar yesterday and held for trial.²⁷ As usual the *New York Herald* gave broader treatment of the subject under the headline, “Wrinkled but Cunning Fingers.”—Abram Myers, alias “General Greenthal,” a notorious “crook” and ex-convict, 55 years old, who says that his residence is at No. 207 East 104th Street, this city, and Wolf Getz, 70 years old, who says he lives at 53 Lewis Street, were before Justice Naehar, in Williamsburg yesterday, charged with having picked the pocket of Robert B. Dibble, of 232 South 9th Street, Williamsburg, of \$800 on 30 December while riding in a streetcar. Both were held for examination.²⁸

²⁵ Certificate 48882 on microfilm 1570466, available through the New York City Municipal Archives or via www.familysearch.org/. They were married by Alderman Charles H. Reilly, with two apparently unrelated witnesses, a strange circumstance for Orthodox Jews. A diligent search failed to find any person named Ostrach or anything similar who would fit the names involved.

²⁶ Monday, 15 February 1886, *New York Times*, p. 8, col. 2.

²⁷ Tuesday, 16 February 1886, *New York Times*, p. 8, col. 5. [Police Justice Charles Naehar, obituary, 14 September 1909 *New York Times*, p. 9, col. 5; and *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Friday, 10 March 1899, p. 3, col. 2.]

²⁸ Tuesday, 16 February 1886, *New York Herald*, p. 5, col. 5.

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Just over a month later, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* published an article on The General. It was entitled, “A Life of Crime: The Career of One of the Most Expert of All Pickpockets.” Abraham Meyers was stoutly-built, gray-haired and with closely clipped whiskers in the Court of Sessions “this morning.” He was indicted for grand larceny in the first degree and arraigned. He understood English. He is known as “Gen.” Gruenthall, known to the police for 40 years as one of the most expert pickpockets in the country. His companion is Bendich or “Wolf” Goetz, the “Cockroach. A middle-aged woman present was Gruenthall’s daughter [perhaps Mally]. Two sons-in-law were also present [perhaps Caspar and Parris]. Gruenthall and Goetz were indicted for picking the pocket of Robt. B. Dibble, a Coney island hotel-keeper, on the 30th of December, in the amount of \$795. The crime was committed on a cross-town car near South 9th Street. While Cleveland was still Governor of New York he “pardoned” Gruenthall, who was serving a 20 year sentence for robbery. The pardon was granted at the intercession of a leading Hebrew gentlemen who wanted to give the old man a chance to die outside prison. Upon his release, Gruenthall renewed his career of crime. He wore a cloak while working. He was a friend of Mother Mandelbaum. He is over age 70 and will be sentenced next Friday.²⁹

The next day, the *New York Herald* carried a full account of what had transpired the previous day. “Brooklyn’s News: ‘General’ Gruenthal, the Pardoned Convict, in for Another Term.”—Abraham Meyers and Wolf Gaetz were arraigned in the Brooklyn Court of Sessions yesterday on an indictment for grand larceny in the first degree. On 30 December they were passengers on the crosstown car when they robbed Robert B. Dibble of Williamsburg of \$795. Gruenthal is 72 years old, and Gaetz appears much older. District Attorney Ridgeway³⁰ was lenient, and Gruenthal was allowed to plead guilty to grand larceny in the Second degree, the penalty for which is imprisonment for from two to five years. Judge Moore³¹ said that he had known the “General” for 30 years, and any pleas for mercy would have to be pretty strong. Gaetz, “the Cockroach” pleaded not guilty and will be tried in a few days. During his last year in office, as Governor, Mr. Cleveland at the earnest petition of influential Hebrews throughout the State, pardoned the “General,” who was serving out a sentence

²⁹ Tuesday, 23 March 1886, Vol. 46, No. 81, p. 4, col. 8; reprinted, Saturday, 27 March 1886, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, Issue 308, p. 5, col. 2. The Wednesday, 24 March 1886, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 2, col. 4, carried essentially the same story, as did *The Omaha Daily Bee*, Friday, 9 April 1886, p. 5, col. 2. Wolf Goetz may have died on 6 December 1890, age 75, *per* Manhattan death record 37675 of that year.

³⁰ On James W. Ridgeway, see Friday, 29 July 1910 *New York Times*, p. 9, col. 3; <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F20E1FFA395D11738DDDA00A94DF405B808DF1D3>

³¹ For more information on Judge Moore, see “Henry A. Moore,” Saturday, 4 January 1896 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, p. 6, col. 1; and “Ex-Judge Henry A. Moore Is Dead,” Sunday, 5 January 1896 *New York Times*, p. 9, col. 3, <http://tiny.cc/61k1rw/>.

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for 20 years in Sing Sing for a robbery committed in Buffalo. A convict confined in a Western “General” is an intimate friend of Mother Mandelbaum, now in Canada.^{32,33}

Judge Moore took a dim view of the aged General. “Gruenthall” was sent to the penitentiary for five years by Judge Moore of the Court of Sessions. The defendant pled guilty. Judge Moore said that the accused was a notorious criminal and that his plea had saved him 15 years.³⁴

The same issue of the same newspaper carried a letter to the editor, approving Judge Moore’s sentence.³⁵

Thus, The General arrived at the final prison in which he was incarcerated:

Name of convict - Meyers, Abraham
County - Kings
Crime - Grand larceny, 2d degree
Court - “Sessions” [Court of General Sessions]
Judge - H. A. Moore
Date of sentence - [Tuesday,] March 30, 1886
Received at prison - Same date

³² Wednesday, 24 March 1886, *New York Herald*, p. 8, col. 6.

³³ See Chapter 6, n. 47. The General and Mother Mandelbaum were not related. They knew each other and were rival receivers of stolen property.

³⁴ Tuesday, 30 March 1886, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Vol. 46, No. 88, p. 6, col. 5. See also Wednesday, 31 March 1886, *New York Herald*, p. 11, col. 1.

³⁵ Tuesday, 30 March 1886, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, p. 1, col. 9. The letter was dated Friday, 27 March 1886.

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Term - 5 years

Remarks - "Professional Crook"³⁶

A bit belatedly, the *New York Daily Tribune* carried a somewhat fanciful version of the truth about The General. "An Old Man Sent to Prison." Abraham Meyers, alias "General" Gruenthal, the notorious pickpocket who is seventy-two years of age, was sentenced yesterday by Judge Moore in Brooklyn to five years in the Penitentiary for his part in robbing R. B. Dibble of \$725 in a street car in December. The prisoner's counsel said that the stories about the criminal career of his client were greatly exaggerated. About nine years ago he was convicted in Monroe County of robbery in the first degree, and sent to the State Prison for twenty years. After serving seven years, it was shown that he was innocent, and Governor Cleveland pardoned him. Before pronouncing sentence Judge Moore said that it was an unpleasant duty to send old men to prison, but in some cases it was impossible to show clemency. This man, to his knowledge, had been a criminal for thirty years, but by his good fortune had failed to be often convicted.³⁷

The prison sentence had one unforeseeable consequence. The General's brother Harris was affected. General Gruenthal's sentence hastens death of his brother, whose apartment was on East 25th Street between First and Second Avenues. The funeral was yesterday for Harris Meyer, a brother of Abraham Meyer, General Gruenthal. Harris had heart trouble for some time and was confined for the last two months to bed in his sister's house. On Tuesday when he heard that Judge Moore of Brooklyn had sentenced his brother to Clinton Prison for five years, he died of nervous prostration. Harris was age 65, seven years younger than the General [actually born 1830 and eight years younger than the General]. He did not take part in the thefts but supplied his brother and companions with money. 15 years ago he was a fence in Second Street, near the Bowery. General Gruenthal's family is related to Mrs. Mandelbaum, who is in Canada.³⁸

Neither The General's incarceration nor the death of his brother saved him from being indicted for

³⁶ New York State Archives, Albany, NY, A0603 Registers of commitments to prisons, 1842-1908, Vol. 11, 1886, Admission of Abraham Meyers to the Kings County Penitentiary. For photographs of the exterior of the Penitentiary, see <http://www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/polly/images/kingspenmid.jpg/>, <http://www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/polly/images/kingspenleft.jpg/>, <http://www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/polly/images/kingspenmid.jpg/>, and <http://www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/polly/images/kingspenrite.jpg/>.

³⁷ Wednesday, 31 March 1886, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 10, col. 5.

³⁸ Thursday, 1 April 1886, *New York Times*, p. 8, col. 5. However, see Chapter 6, n. 51. See also Thursday, 1 April 1886 *The Brooklyn Union*, Brooklyn, NY, Vol. XXIII, No. 207, p. 2, col. 5. Because of the use of aliases and frequent name changes, it has proven impossible to track Harris.

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another crime. “The Cockroach” joins his pal.—Abraham Meyer, alias General Greenthal, and Wolf Goetz, alias “The Cockroach,” were jointly indicted for robbing a man in a street car. The former is serving five years in the Kings County Penitentiary. Both men are over 70 years of age and lifelong criminals.³⁹

It was at this point that Thomas Byrnes, New York City’s first Chief of Detectives published his book containing the mugshots of a large number of criminals of the day, including The General and his brother.⁴⁰ It is uncertain if The General had any idea of his notoriety beyond police employees, even though he certainly knew that the New York City and many other newspapers followed his every adventure and the consequences of those actions when he was apprehended.



From the end of March 1886 until September 1888, The General, being in prison in Kings County, was not mentioned in the newspapers. But now a different issue with respect to him captured the public imagination, if only briefly. The first to report the news was *The Sun*:

³⁹ Saturday, 17 April 1886, *New York Herald*, p. 8, col. 1, under the headline, “Pith of a Day in Brooklyn” Because of the use of aliases and frequent name changes, it has proven impossible to track Wolf Goetz. Wolf may have been his middle name.

⁴⁰ Byrnes, Thomas, *1886 Professional Criminals of America*. Mugshots and writeups of Abraham and Harris Greenthal, entries and mugshots 152 and 153, respectively. <http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924096989177#page/n299/mode/2up/>, see especially pp. 39, 157, and 224-226.

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Greenthal Wants His Young Wife.

She Got a Separation, but the Aged Crook Wants the Case Reopened.

Abraham Greenthal, alias Gen. Greenthal, alias Abraham Meyer, is about 76 years of age, tall, well built, and intelligent. He is soldierly in his bearing, and from that fact arises his military title. He is now undergoing a sentence in Kings county penitentiary for robbery. On July 24 his wife, Rawley Greenthal, sued to annul her marriage on the ground of fraud. She alleges that she was married on Aug. 3, 1885, in this city. She was an orphan, without any guardian, and about 18 years old. Her maiden name was Rawley Ostrach. To induce her to consent to the marriage Greenthal, she says, represented that his name was Abraham Leslau, and that he was a physician. She then rehearses his crimes and convictions. Among other things, she says that in 1877 he was sentenced to the State prison at Auburn for twenty years for robbery. In 1884 representations were made to Gov. Cleveland that he was an old man and suffering from ill health, whereupon his sentence was commuted and he was set at liberty. These facts were unknown to her at the time of her marriage. On Dec. 30, 1885, Greenthal was arrested in Brooklyn for robbery in the first degree, and on March 23, 1886, he pleaded guilty to robbery in the second degree, and was sentenced to the Kings county penitentiary for five years, and there he is still confined. Immediately upon her discovery of the falsehood of the representations and of the true character of the defendant, about Jan. 1, 1886, she left his house, and has never since lived with him.

She took judgment in an Orange county court by default, but Greenthal has retained Lawyer John Cooney of Brooklyn to see whether the Supreme Court will still permit an answer to be interposed.⁴¹

Again, the *New York Herald* carried an extensive comment. The notorious "General" Greenthal, alias Abraham Meyers, alias Abraham Leslau, whose picture is in the Rogue's Gallery of New York City, asks that [his wife's] divorce suit be reopened. He is now in the Kings County Penitentiary. Mrs. Rawley Greenthal recently obtained judgment of annulment of their marriage against the "General," who is 70, while she is 18. Greenthal has now retained John Cooney, lawyer, to reopen the judgment. Mrs. Greenthal alleged that her maiden name was Rawley Ostrach and that she was married on Monday, 3 August 1885. Greenthal falsely represented himself to be a physician in active practice as Abraham Leslau. He was sentenced to five years in the penitentiary in 1886. Because his reputation is so bad, she sought divorce to be able to work under her own name to support herself. Greenthal says that she knew all about him. He was born in Prussia and came from a family of thieves. His father served 15 years for robbery committed when his son was eight years old. The boy was a pickpocket in childhood and early manhood, serving terms in Prussian prisons for his crimes. When his father was released, they operated together. One crime was stealing a wallet containing 150,000 francs from a wealthy farmer. For this crime he was sentenced to seven

⁴¹ Sunday, 9 September 1888, New York, Vol. LVI, No. 9, p. 10, col. 2.

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years' imprisonment but made his escape on his way to jail and went to Liverpool. There, and in other English cities, he and his wife, an accomplished shoplifter, had a successful career but finally fled to the USA. His first robbery in New York City was in a store in Barclay Street in 1857. He got off by "peaching" upon the truckman who had acted as his tool. At one time Lesler set up in New York City as a receiver of stolen goods, being almost as notorious as "Mother" Mandelbaum, but she had the strongest pull with detectives and finally crushed him. Lately he has resumed his old trade.⁴²

The case was sufficiently interesting that another newspaper also noted the developments, adding additional details. "Will Try to Recover His Wife: A Brooklyn Pickpocket Asks the Court To Annul a Divorce." "Gen." Greenthal was sent to Crow's Hill Penitentiary, Brooklyn, in 1886 for five years for pickpocketing \$800 from the pocket of Robert H. Dibble, a Coney Island hotelkeeper. Greenthal filed an action on Sunday, 9 September 1888, in Kings County Supreme Court. On Monday, 3 August 1885, Greenthal, then over age 70 years, having palmed himself off as a physician, Dr. Abraham Leslau, on Rawley Ostrach, age 18, married her. The first that she knew that he was a pickpocket was on New Year's day 1886, when detectives visited her house to search for him, stating that he was wanted for having picked the pocket of Mr. Dibble two days earlier. Greenthal was arrested, tried, and sentenced, whereupon his wife learned of his extended criminal career, until just a short time before their marriage. He was released from Auburn State Prison, after having served seven years of a 20-year sentence, having been "pardoned" by Gov. Cleveland, "on representations that he was dying." The wife applied for an annulment of the marriage, granted by Chief Justice Barnard of the Supreme Court, the case going by default. Greenthal retained lawyer John Carney of Brooklyn, who asks the Supreme Court to open the default to allow Greenthal to defend the action. Greenthal's "pals" may have provided the funds because the children by a former wife, when requested, refused to do so. His girl bride was authorized to resume her former name and has returned to work to support herself as she did before her marriage.⁴³

The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* did not mention that the annulment had been granted and that The General wanted the default judgment set aside and the case reopened. Greenthal or Meyers or Leslau, age 70, serving a term of five years for robbery, tries to retain his 18-year-old wife. She sues for divorce as having been deceived as to his character which she claims prevents her from obtaining a livelihood so long as married to him. He will contest the suit.⁴⁴

Even one upstate newspaper carried the news. "General" Greenthal in Trouble Again. Abe Greenthal, an aged man and one of the most celebrated confidence men and thieves in this country,

⁴² Monday, 10 September 1888, p. 10, col. 4.

⁴³ Monday, 10 September 1888, *The World*, New York, Evening Edition, p. 4, col. 4.

⁴⁴ Sunday, 16 September 1888 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Vol. 48, No. 258, p. 8, col. 4.

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married a young girl who now wants to be freed from him, claiming that she was unaware of his character when she married him. He was once arrested in Elmira for picking pockets but not convicted. He is upwards of 70 years of age.⁴⁵

The newspapers do not indicate whether The General was successful in having the case reopened. Instead, it is clear that the aged master thief's health was deteriorating, which we know from the fact of his release from prison.

Kings County Penitentiary, March 1886

Name - Meyers, Abram

County - Kings

Crime - grand larceny, 2d degree

Court - Sessions [*i. e.* General Sessions]

Judge - H. A. Moore

Date of sentence - [Tuesday,] March 30, 1886

Date received - same

Term of sentence - 5 years

Commutation of sentence earned - 1 year 5 months

Date of discharge - [Tuesday,] Oct. 29, 1889⁴⁶

He died about three weeks later, as shown by his death certificate. Abraham Grünthal, occupation: none. Age 70, married; resident in New York City for 42 years, *i. e.* to the United States *c.* 1847. Born in Germany, son of Aisik Grünthal, born in Germany, and Leier [should read "Lea."] Grünthal, born in Germany. Living at 135 Suffolk Street, Manhattan, at time of death. Ward 17. Cause of death: Asthma from lung paralysis and fatty heart [heart disease]. Burial in Salem Fields Cemetery, in the unmapped Beth Israel section, Tuesday, 19 November 1889, listed as age 71 at the time of his death in the Salem Fields Cemetery records.⁴⁷ The grave in the Beth Israel Section, Salem Fields Cemetery, Brooklyn, could not be found although a note in the cemetery office confirms the burial.

⁴⁵ Sunday, 23 September 1888 *Elmira Telegram*, p. 25, col. 4.

⁴⁶ New York State Archives, Record Group A0604, Corp/Agency author: New York (State). Governor, Registers of discharges of convicts by commutation of sentences, 1883-1916. The record for Abram Meyers is found in Box 5. Quantity: 20 cubic feet (25 volumes and 9 rolls).

⁴⁷ Death certificate 35442 of 1889 for 17 November 1889=Sunday, 23 Marcheshvan 5650. The primary cause of death was Cor adiposum [fatty heart layer] (asthma) while the secondary cause was paralysis cordis s(eptum); ruptura [heart paralysis due to damage to the ventricular septum; rupture]. Buried in Salem Fields Cemetery, 775 Jamaica Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11208. Telephone: 1-888-427-7535; salemfields@verizon.net; open 8-4:30, except Saturday. The General was buried in the same burial society plot as his wife and son. See Chapter 7, nn. 8 and 12.

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The New York City newspapers did not carry the news until 3 days after the death. “Greenthal dies.” He died last Sunday at the home of his daughter in Harlem and was buried today. He died of diseases of old age, aggravated by confinement in the Kings County Penitentiary, from which he was released a few weeks ago. He was the head of a pickpocket gang and did not engage in thefts but in the disposal of the plunder. He was a native of Poland and came to this country when young. He was nearly 70 years old at the time of his death. He once had close business connections with Mother Mandelbaum, now a fugitive in Canada. He used money and influence to get out of police custody. In March 1877 he was arrested with his brother Harris and his son-in-law, Samuel Caspar in Rochester for robbery in the Central Railroad Station. He was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in Auburn State prison but was pardoned in 1884 by Governor Cleveland on the basis of bad health. On Wednesday, 30 December 1885, he was arrested for robbery by Thomas Byrnes. Greenthal was turned over to Brooklyn authorities, tried, convicted, and sentenced to five years in the Kings County Penitentiary. His sentence began on Tuesday, 23 March 1886, and he was released about 3 weeks ago. All the Greenthal women were shoplifters and the men pickpockets.⁴⁸

Other newspapers chose somewhat different facts to tell their readers. Pickpocket Greenthal Buried.—Consumption Ends the Life of a Criminal Who Practiced His Profession for Thirty Years. Abraham Greenthal, alias “General,” a well known pickpocket and general thief, was buried quietly yesterday from his sister’s house in the 10th Ward. He came from a family of thieves. He was well known to police in this country and in Canada and stood at the head of a line of pickpockets ready to do his bidding. Mrs. Mandelbaum bought goods that he disposed of. He was born in Poland, died Sunday at age 64, supposedly never having done an honest days’ work. The “General’s” last arrest, soon after his release from Auburn Prison was for robbing a farmer in Rochester. He was captured with Benedick Goetz for robbing Robert B. Dibble of Williamsburg of a pocketbook containing nearly \$800. Greenthal pleaded guilty to grand larceny in the 2nd degree and was sentenced to five years in Crow Hill Penitentiary. He was released from prison 3 weeks ago to take to his bed with consumption, a disease that had troubled him for years.⁴⁹

The *New York Tribune* managed to add a few more details. DIED OLD in CRIME AND YEARS. “Abraham Greenthal, alias ‘the General,’ alias Meyers, pickpocket, sixty years old in 1886,” is the description of portrait No. 152 in Inspector Byrne’s gallery. The original of the picture, who as one of the best known and most skillful pickpockets in the United States, died on Sunday morning at the house of his sister, No. 65 Eldridge St. The funeral will take place from that house this morning at 10 o’clock. “The General,” as he was called, was recently released from the Kings County Penitentiary after serving a five-years’ sentence for stealing a diamond stud. He had been arrested a number of times for picking pockets and for receiving stolen property and has served several

⁴⁸ Wednesday, 20 November 1889, *New York Times*, p. 8, col. 5.

⁴⁹ Wednesday, 20 November 1889, *New York Herald*, p. 4, col. 6.

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sentences. In April 1877, he was sentenced to twenty years at the Auburn State Prison for robbery in Rochester, but he was pardoned in 1884 by Governor Cleveland. He leaves four daughters. His death was due to heart disease.⁵⁰

“Gen.” Greenthal Is Dead. He Was One of the Cleverest Pickpockets in the Whole United States. Abraham Greenthal, better known to the police as “General” Greenthal, was buried quietly yesterday from the residence of his sister, in the Tenth Ward. His death occurred on Sunday. He was acknowledged to be one of the most expert pickpockets in the country and was the leader of the notorious mob that operated all over the country.. He was sixty-three years old and received his discharge from the Kings County Penitentiary a few weeks ago, where he was serving a five-year term for aiding Benedick Goetz, alias “The Cockroach,” in robbing Robert B. Dibble, of Williamsburg, of a pocketbook containing \$795 in money on a cross-town car. Heart disease carried the General off. He was born in Poland and passed as a German. He was a widower, stoutly built, wore no whiskers and had a benevolent look.. His home was in the Tenth Ward, and for over thirty years he was known to the police as a receiver of stolen goods and a general thief. He was a warm friend and close companion of Mme. Mandelbaum, who is now a member of the American colony of refugees in Canada. In March 1877 in the company of his brother Harris, alias Herman Greenthal, and Samuel Casper, his son-in-law, the General was arrested for robbing Wm. Jinkson of \$1,190 in the New York Central Railroad Depot in Rochester. Jinkson sold a farm in Massachusetts and exhibited his roll of greenbacks in Albany. The Greenthal gang followed him, and at Rochester told him he must change cars. One of the thieves politely carried the old farmer’s valise and the entire party entered another car on the same train. In jostling through the crowd the “General” relieved Jinkson of his pocketbook. The trio were arrested, tried and convicted, the old man receiving a sentence on [Thursday,] April 19, 1877, of twenty years’ imprisonment in Auburn Prison. His son [*sic*], Harris, got eighteen years and the son-in-law received a sentence of fifteen years. Harris and Casper were pardoned by Gov. Cleveland in December 1884, the “General” receiving a similar favor in the previous Spring. A year later the “General” committed his last robbery, in Brooklyn, and went from the Kings County Penitentiary to a bed of sickness, which closed his earthly career.. He served several partial terms in various prisons, but generally secured a pardon before the full term was over. He had four daughters, one of whom is known as “Mollie Burns.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ Wednesday, 20 November 1889, Vol. XLIX, No. 15,711, p. 2, col. 6.

⁵¹ Wednesday, 20 November 1889, *The New York World*, p. 6, col. 3. See also Wednesday, 20 November 1889, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, p. 3, col. 6; Thursday, 21 November 1889 *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Vol. 47, p. 2, col. 5; Thursday, 21 November 1889, *The Daily Inter Ocean*, Chicago, Illinois, Vol. XVIII, No. 249, p. 8, col. 1; Thursday, 21 November 1889, *The Daily Picayune*, Times Picayune, New Orleans, LA, Vol. LIII, No. 301, p. 1, col. 6; Thursday, 21 November 1889, *The Courier-Journal*, Louisville, KY, Vol. LXXIV, No. New Series 7,631, p. 2, col. 2; Friday Evening, 22 November 1889, *Muskegan [MI] Daily Chronicle*, Vol. XI, No. 157, p. 1, col. 6; Wednesday, 27

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Except for the recollections of an old, former criminal, published in 1912,⁵² The General is never again mentioned by name in any newspaper articles. Even mentions of pickpockets become rarer with only one allusion found in 1908. “Uplifting Children of the Foreign Born.—Harlem Educational Institute Needs More Money for Its Building Operation.” In looking into the migration of the foreign-born from the lower east side to Harlem, it was found that more than 20,000 Jewish boys and girls were growing up without any religious, moral or ethical training of any kind except that of their homes. The pickpocket schools, cheap theatres and vile dance halls were discovered to be drawing toward them many young men and women whose minds were being poisoned by their allurements.⁵³

Thus, of The General’s death, with only a little irony, one repeats the Latin phrase, “*Sic transit gloria mundi.*”⁵⁴

November 1889 *The Enterprise*, Wellington, Ohio, Vol. XXIII, No. 48, p. 2, col. 1; Wednesday, 27 November 1889, *Mower County Transcript*, Austin, MN, Vol. XXII, No. not shown, p. 2, col. 3; Thursday, 28 November 1889, *The Elyria [Ohio] Democrat*, Vol. XXIV, No. 12, p. 2, col. 1; Sunday, 1 December 1889, *Trenton Sunday Advertiser/Trenton Evening Times*, Trenton NJ, p. 9, cols. 1-2; Friday, 29 November 1889 *The Galion Inquirer*, Galion, Ohio, Vol. XIII, No. 12, p. 2, col. 1; Thursday, 5 December 1889, *Aberdeen Daily News*, p. 3, col. 2, with line drawing of Greenthal’s face; and Sunday morning, 15 December 1889, *Wichita Eagle*, Wichita, Kansas, Vol. XII, No. 25, p. 10, col. 6, but article begins on col. 5.

⁵² See Chapter 2, n. 42. For an illustration of how the thieves worked in Greenthal time, see <http://cdn.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3c20000/3c21000/3c21400/3c21403r.jpg>

⁵³ Sunday, *The New York World*, New York, NY, 23 February 1908, p. 5, col. 2.

⁵⁴ Thus passes glory from the world.—Translation by author.

Chapter 9
A Word about Surviving Descendants and Other Relatives

Although we cannot be absolutely certain that the Abraham Grunthal, listed in the 1860 Federal Census for New York, living in New York City,¹ is a relative of The General, it seems probable. This Abraham is age 75, born in Germany, living in the home of Johanna Grunthal. She did not work, but her eldest son, Phillip, age 19, was a jeweler. Abraham has no profession listed. He is most likely Johanna's father-in-law.

Probably, Abraham had another relative listed in the 1860 Federal Census for New York. He was Robert Grunthal, age 27, a hatter, living with his wife Hannah and daughter Louisa. Robert was born in Prussia while Hannah, age 22, and Louisa, age 1, were born in New York.² It is most likely that Robert sold his business³ to Isidore Grenthal.⁴

As discussed in Chapter 1, n. 6, Abraham's eldest sister, Male, almost certainly died in Posen. His younger brother came to the United States, perhaps after 1855.⁵

In the 1870 Federal Census for Anally Township, Sonoma County, California, stamped "220," p. 5, line 26, Hannah Phillips, age 31, was married to Moses C. Phillips, age 41, retail merchant, who owned real property and personal property. He was born in Russia while she was born in Prussia. They had children Leah, age 10, Harris, age 8, Frances, age 7, and Mathilda, age 4. The first 3 were born in California and were in school while the last was born in Nevada and was at home. Only Harris was male.

¹ Fourth District, enumerated on 16 June 1860 on page 51 (marked 383), line 35. With the help of Trow's New York City Directory for 1860-61, we can deduce that he lived at 239 Second Avenue.

² Enumerated 5 July 1860, Federal Census of 1860, New York City, Ward 22, 2nd Division, p. 164, lines 23-25.

³ He both lived and worked at 629 Eighth Avenue, New York City, according to Trow's City Directory for 1860-61.

⁴ As discussed in Chapter 2, n. 46.

⁵ See 1880 Federal Census for New Jersey, Montclair Township, Essex County, New Jersey, Enumeration District 105, p. 18, lines 46-49, showing H. Harris, age 66, no profession, born in Prussia. His wife, Hannah, age 66, at home, also born in Prussia. The couple had two sons, Louis, age 27, and Jacob, age 25, both born in Prussia.

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Abraham's sister in Salt Lake City, Utah, was Hannah Phillips, born about 1840 in Prussia of Prussian-born parents. She was actually born Ewa⁶ but popularly called Hannah and was married to Moses C. Phillips, cigar merchant. Two daughters were born in California, while the youngest was born in Nevada. They lived at 207 Third South, Salt Lake City, Utah. Moses C. Phillips was age 51, born in Russia of parents born in Europe, while Hannah was age 40, at home, was born in Prussia of parents born in Prussia. Their children were Leah, age 20 and at home, Frances, age 17 and at school, and Tillie, age 14, and at school.⁷

In 1900 she was living at 352 East 2nd South Street, Salt Lake City, Utah, with her husband and family. The house was owned, free of any mortgage. Moses C. Phillips was born in February 1827 and was age 73, having been born in New York of parents born in Germany. He was retired. She was born in August 1840 and was age 59. The couple had been married for 40 years and had 4 children, all living. The couple had been married in 1860. She was born in New York of parents born in Germany. Two daughters, Frances, born in 1874, age 25, born in California, living at home and Tillie, born in 1876, age 23, born in California, and both unemployed, lived with them.⁸

In the 1910 Federal Census for Utah, Hannah, age 69, was living at 351 East 2nd South Street, with her husband, Moses C. Phillips, age 81, and children, Frances, age 40, and Mathilde, age 35. Two daughters, Frances, age 25, born in California, a stenographer in a real estate agency, and Tillie, age 23, born in Nevada, unemployed, lived with the family and did not work. Both daughters had been born in California. Listed as a nephew but probably a grandson, Chester P. Hyams, listed as age 16 but actually age 26, lived with the family and clerked in a dry goods store.⁹

In the 1920 Federal Census for Utah, Hannah is widowed, living with her daughters at the same address. She owned the house, but it was mortgaged. She was age 79, widowed, having immigrated

⁶ See Chapter 1, n. 6. Ewa was born on Tuesday, 6 August 1833 = 21 Av 5593, while Eve Hannah Phillips is listed as having been born on Saturday, 8 August 1840 = 9 Av 5600. The discrepancy of the difference of 2 days might be explained by the difference between the Gregorian and Hebrew calendars for a particular day in the Hebrew calendar. However, the fact that a child was born on Saturday, the Sabbath, is not likely to have been overlooked in a religious Jewish family. The explanation of the discrepancy of the seven years difference in the date of birth is uncertain. Nevertheless, this woman does appear to have been Abraham's younger sister, Ewa.

⁷ 1880 Federal Census for Utah, 7 June 1880, E. D. 42, p. 26, line 25.

⁸ U. S. Federal Census for Utah, Supervisor's District No, 273, Enumeration District 50, page 3A, stamped 247.

⁹ E. D. 143, Sheet 7A, line 49.

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in 1869 and was naturalized on an unknown date, probably as a result of her husband's naturalization. She was born in Germany of parents born in Germany and had no profession. Daughters Frances, age 48, born in California, a clerk in a purchasing office, and Mathilda, age 45, born in Nevada, unemployed, lived in the house.¹⁰

Hannah Phillips does not appear in the 1930 census, having died in 1929. In the 1930 Federal Census for Utah, Hannah's daughters, Frances, age 67, born in California, and doing general office work in a government office, and Matilda, age 64, born in Nevada, and a chief clerk in a government office, along with Leah, age 70, a widow, unemployed, lived at 353 East 2nd South, Salt Lake City. The house was owned and worth \$12,500. The sisters were children of a father born in Poland and a mother born in Germany.¹¹

Hannah's death was reported in the local newspaper. Death: Hannah Eva Phillips, Age: 89, Birth Date: *circa* 1840, Death Date: 8 August 1929, Death County: Salt Lake. Moses C. Phillips died on Wednesday, 15 October 1913.¹²

Information on Hannah's burial is available for B'Nai Israel Cemetery.

Name:	Eva Hannah Phillips
Birth Date:	1840
Death Date:	8 Aug 1929
Age at Death:	89
Burial Plot:	East-F-17
Burial Place:	Salt Lake City, Utah, United States
Spouse Name:	PHILLIPS, Moses Casper
Other surnames:	Phillips
Photo:	Image Available

¹⁰ E. D. 153, Sheet 5A, line 49.

¹¹ 12 April 1930, E. D. 18-79, Sheet 10A, stamped 198, lines 32 and 33. Fifth Ward, Block No. 1888. Leah P. Hyams, lived with them, line 34. Only she had been married.

¹² State File Number: 1929003384. Thursday, 16 October 1913 *Salt Lake City Tribune*, p. 16, col. 2 (with photograph).

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Cemetery: Bnai Israel Cemetery
Cemetery Address: 225 North Street Cemetery Burials:
778¹³

Hannah Eva Phillips' obituary notice appeared the day after her death. Mrs. Hanna Eva Phillips, 89, died Thursday of infirmities incident to old age in her home, 353 East Second South Street. She was the widow of M. C. Phillips. Born in Frankfort, Germany, she came to the United States when young, and, in 1852, was married to Mr. Phillips in New York. They came to Utah via the Isthmus of Panama and San Francisco, arriving here in 1872. Mrs. Phillips, before her retirement within the last few years, was active in social and civic affairs of Salt Lake, and was a charter member of the Orphan's Home and Day Nursery and of the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society. Surviving her are a son, Harry Phillips, of Los Angeles, three daughters, Mrs. Louis Hyams of Los Angeles, and the Misses Frances and Mathilda Phillips, both of Salt Lake, and three grandchildren, Chester Phillips Hyams, of Los Angeles, Harold Francis Hyams of Salt Lake, and Leland Gilbert Hyams of Clear Lake, Cal.¹⁴ Notice of her funeral appeared one day later. Phillips—Funeral services for Hannah E. Phillips will be held Sunday morning at the residence, 353 East 2nd South, at 11 o'clock, with interment in the family plot [East-F-17] in the B'Nai Israel cemetery. Friends who wish may see Mrs. Phillips at the residence Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning prior to the services.¹⁵

Hannah's gravestone states her name as Eva Hannah Phillips, indicating that she was born in 1840 and died in 1929.¹⁶

With respect to her husband, M. C. Phillips registered for the Civil War Draft in Scott River, Northern Congressional District. He was age 34 on 1 July 1863, and married, born in Poland about 1829. No former military service and no remarks.¹⁷

¹³ Bnai Israel is at 225 North and Center Street. Contact Carol Hochstadt, chochstadt@gmail.com Cemetery administered by Congregation Kol Ami.

¹⁴ Friday, 9 August 1929 *Salt Lake Tribune*, p. 27, col. 2.

¹⁵ Saturday, 10 August 1929 *Salt Lake Tribune*, p. 23, col. 2.

¹⁶ A photograph of the gravestone is in the file. Similarly, the website shows that Moses Casper Phillips was born in 1828 and died in 1913. A photograph of the gravestone is also on the <http://www.FindAGrave.com> website.

¹⁷ Retrieved on <http://www.Ancestry.com/>. Class 1; 38th subdistrict. Compiled in October, November, and December 1863 and January 1864 under Capt. W. H. Parks, Provost Marshal. No. 34, line 10.

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Moses Casper Phillips was registered to vote in two different registers in the Great Register of Alameda County under section 8 on 5 October 1868. He was listed as a merchant, born in Poland, living in Oakland City, CA. He is also registered in the Great Register of 1869 in Sonoma County, stating that he was born in New York and was a merchant, residing in Analy, and registered on 30 August 1869. He appears, listed as a merchant, in the 1872 *Directory of the City of Oakland*.¹⁸ He lived on Sixth Street between Jefferson and Clay. In 1890 he is listed in Salt Lake City, Utah, as a license collector, living at 351 East Second South. In the Utah Death Registers, Moses Casper Phillips is listed as having died on 15 October 1913.¹⁹ According to the cemetery record, Moses Phillips died on 15 October 1913, age 85, born in 1828.²⁰

Moses C. Phillips' obituary appeared in the Thursday, 16 October 1913 *Salt Lake Tribune*.²¹ He was married to Eva Hannah Phillips. He was born in Verballen, Russia, on 10 December 1828 and immigrated as a boy. He came to Utah in 1872. His wife, one son, and 3 daughters as well as 4 grandchildren survived him. He was an active Mason, first in Scottsboro, California, and later in Salt Lake City.

In the 1880 Federal Census for New York The General's eldest daughter, Mollie Caspar, was listed as living at 3 Attorney Street, New York City, with her family:²² The record shows:

Samuel Caspar, age 33, salesman, born in Prussia of parents born in Prussia. Mollie Caspar, age 30, wife, keeping house, born New York, of parents born in Prussia. The children are listed as Isaac, age 7, at school; David, age 5, at home; and Henry, age 3, at home. All of the children are listed as born in New York, of a father born in Prussia and of a mother born in New York. The two elder children were at school while the youngest one was at home.

¹⁸ Oakland: Henry G. Langley, 1872, p. 201

¹⁹ State File Number 1913003833. All retrieved from <http://www.Ancestry.com/>.

²⁰ Buried in Plot East-F-16, B'Nai Israel Cemetery, 225 North Street at Center Street, Salt Lake City, UT. See n. 16.

²¹ See p. 16, col. 2, with photograph.

²² 1880 Federal Census for New York, 8 June, page 27, Supervisor's District No. 1, Enumeration District No. 146, 398, p. 27, lines 26-30.

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Casper Parris, age 48, pedlar, listed as “Harris” also lived in the same household. He was born in Prussia of parents born in Prussia. He was a boarder, and there was one other boarder living in the apartment. A Casper L. Paris, age 77, died in Brooklyn, New York, on 18 June 1906.²³

Molly Caspar did not sign the letter to Gov. Grover Cleveland, implying that she might not have been alive in 1884.

In the 1880 Federal Census for New York, Frances Aaron, age 25, married but living without her husband, lived at 194 Grand Street in the home of her father-in-law, Isadore Aaron, with her daughter, Florence, age 5. Both were listed as born in New York State of parents born in New York State. Her father-in-law was a pawnbroker.²⁴ Frances has not been located in any subsequent census record. She may be the “Francis J. Aaron” who died on 7 July 1888 in Manhattan.²⁵

In the 1880 Federal Census for New York, Mary Moses, indicated that she was age 30, keeping house and living with her husband Solomon Moses, age 57. She was born in New York of parents born in Germany while he was born in London, of parents both born in London. They had 2 children, Keeley, age 3 and Harry, age 1, both born in New York. They all live at 118 Clinton Street. They have one female servant, age 15.²⁶

From a Saturday, 16 February 1884, letter to Governor Grover Cleveland, assuring the Governor that their father would go to Salt Lake City to live with his sister for the balance of his life:²⁷

Mrs. Frances Aaron, 393 Grand Street, New York City

Mrs. Mary Keeley, 22 Norfolk Street, New York City

Mrs. Ray Evens, 313 Broome Street, New York City

A Rachel Evans, born *circa* 1848, age 50, died in Manhattan on 7 June 1898 in New York, New York.²⁸

²³ New York City Vital Records, death certificate 12090 of that year.

²⁴ 1880 Federal Census for New York, 1 June, Supervisor’s District No. 1, Enumeration District No. 51, p. 2, lines 17-18, with one servant.

²⁵ Manhattan death certificate 21633 for 1888.

²⁶ 1880 Federal Census for New York, 11 June 1880, page 40, Supervisor’s District No. 1, Enumeration District No. 150, Lines 2-6.

²⁷ See Chapter 8, n. 5.

²⁸ Certificate Number 15478.

A Word about Surviving Descendants and Other Relatives

Mary Moses, sometimes surnamed Keeley, the youngest daughter, appeared in the 1880 Federal Census as married to Solomon Moses, living at 118 Clinton Street, New York City, with her husband and family.²⁹ Mary married Solomon Moses on 14 February 1878 according to the Manhattan marriage records,³⁰ but her surname is listed as “Leslaw,” probably a misreading of “Leslau,” a frequent family alias.

In the 1900 Federal Census, Mary lived at 261 Third Avenue, New York City. She claimed to have been born in April 1862, making her 37. She and her husband were married for 22 years; thus, she would have been age 15 when married. She claimed to have had 14 children, of whom 8 were then living. She was born in New Jersey of parents both born in Germany. Her husband’s profession is unreadable. She was living with her husband and children Nathan, age 17, Hattie, age 12, Julius, age 6, and Willie, age 4.³¹

In the 1910 Federal Census, on 25 April 1910, Mary, age 47, was the widowed head of household, living at 180 East 113th Street, Manhattan, with her children. She was married 28 years and had 14 children of whom 8 were living in 1910. She stated that she was born in New Jersey of a father born in Russian Poland whose native language was Yiddish and of a mother born in Germany and whose native language was German. Mary had no profession and was at home. Her children were Nathan, age 27, driver for a department store; Joseph, age 24, a tracer in a furniture store; Hattie, age 22, a cashier in a department store; Charles, age 21, an unemployed helper in an awning store; Abraham, age 19, a helper in a paint store; Rudolph, age 16, an errand boy in a millinery shop; William age 11, at school; and Julius, age 13, at school.³²

In the 1920 Federal census, on 16 January 1920 Mary, a widow, age 53, lived as head of the household with some of her children at 212 190th Street, New York, New York. She stated that she was born in New Jersey of parents born in Germany. She had no occupation. Her children, living with her, were Hattie, age 28, not working, Rudolph, age 23, an apprentice in a cleaning concern; and William, age 19, a messenger in a telegraph concern.³³

In the 1930 Federal Census, Mary lived at the same address, 212 East 123rd Street, Manhattan, with

²⁹ 1880 Federal Census for New York, 11 June 1880, Enumeration District 150, p. 40, line 3.

³⁰ New York City marriage records for Manhattan, certificate 499.

³¹ 1900 Federal Census, 5 June, E. D. 929, Sheet 8A, line 31.

³² Enumeration District 413, Sheet 16A, lines 7-15.

³³ Enumeration District 1381, Sheet 11 B, lines 81-84.

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the same children. She was age 65, widowed, age 17 years old when first married. She stated that she was born in New Jersey of parents born in Germany. No profession. Rudolph was an examiner in a clothing factory, William retained his messenger job with the telegraph company, and Hattie had no profession.³⁴

Mrs. Ray Evens/Evans was not found in any census records, and no marriage record was found.

³⁴ Enumeration District 31-966, sheet 13A, stamped 260, line 34.

Chapter 10
Genealogical Tables

Abraham's Generation

1. **Abraham GREENTHAL**, later called Abraham Meyer in the United States, was born on 9 January 1822/16 Tevet 5582 in Betsche, Prussia [Germany], now Pszczew, Poland. See Family History (Mormon) Library, microfilm 1335040, item 3, pp. 5-6. He sailed from Liverpool, England, on the American ship Roscius on Saturday, 12 April 1851, with the couple being listed on the New York arrival manifest as Mr. and Mrs. A. Green. He arrived with his wife in the port of New York on 11 May 1851. Declaration of Intention filed as Abraham Greenton on Monday, 26 May 1851, in the Court of Common Pleas, New York, New York. Naturalized on 14 January 1856 in the Court of Common Pleas, Hudson County, New Jersey. For his draft registration see Wednesday, 1 July 1863 Draft Registration, G. 10th Ward, No. 72. Record Group 110, Vol. 1 of 3, Vol. 1320, NM-65, E.172, p. 307. Class I, A-G, New York 5th Congressional District, May and June 1863. Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau, Enrollment Lists and Corrections to Enrollment Lists, 1863-1865, at the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. He died on 17 November 1889 in New York, New York. See Manhattan death certificate, No. 35442. He was buried on 19 November 1889 in Beth Israel Section, Salem Fields Cemetery, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York.

Abraham married **Hannah DAVID**, daughter of **David MOSES** of Breslau, about 1850 in Breslau, Silesia, Prussia [Germany]. Hannah was born in 1830 in Breslau, Silesia, Prussia [Germany]. She arrived with her husband at the Port of New York. She died on 3 September 1876 in New York, New York. She was buried on 5 September 1876 in Beth Israel Section, Salem Fields Cemetery, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York.

They had the following children:

- F i. **Mallie GREENTHAL**, also called Malca, was born about 1851 in New York, New York. She died before 1884.
- F ii. **Rachel GREENTHAL**, called Ray, was born about 1852 in New York, New York.
- F iii. **Frances GREENTHAL**, sometimes incorrectly spelled Francis, was born about 1853 in New York, New York.
- M iv. **Isaac GREENTHAL** was born in August or September 1856 in New York, New York. He died on 3 September 1861 in West Hoboken (now part of Union City), Hudson County, New Jersey. See Manhattan death certificate, No. 19225. He was buried in September 1861 in Beth Israel Section, Salem Fields Cemetery, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York.

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- F v. **Mary GREENTHAL** was born in April 1859 in New York, New York. She died on 28 August 1948 in New York, New York. She was buried in August 1948 in Mount Neboh Cemetery, Glendale, Queens County, New York.

Parents

2. Isaac Hirsch LESLAUER was born about 1788 in Betsche, Prussia [Germany], now Pszczew, Poland. He died in between 1848-1855 in Betsche, Prussia [Germany], now Pszczew, Poland. Isaac married Lea DAVID on 19 August 1817 in Betsche, Prussia [Germany], now Pszczew, Poland. In early age, living in Inowrazlaw.

3. Lea DAVID. Daughter of Itzig Hirsch of Inowrazlaw. Married by Rabbi Michael Levi Golde of Meseritz.

Lea and Isaac had the following children:

F I. **Male LESLAUER** was born on 16 January 1818 in Betsche, Prussia [Germany], now Pszczew, Poland. She died before 1851 in Betsche, Prussia [Germany], now Pszczew, Poland. Illegitimate, because her parents were not officially recognized as married at the time of her birth although they were married by a rabbi and so recognized as married by the Jewish community.

M ii. **Abraham “Abraham Meyer” GREENTHAL** was born on 9 January 1822. He died on 17 November 1889.

M iii. **Hirsch “Harris, Hermann, Heymann” LESLAUER** was born on 22 March 1830 in Betsche, Prussia [Germany], now Pszczew, Poland. This person arrived in the United States at the port of New York.

F iv. **Ewa Hannah LESLAUER**, called Hannah, was born on 6 August 1833 in Betsche, Prussia [Germany], now Pszczew, Poland. Arrival in USA from another country. She died on 8 August 1929 in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah. She was buried in August 1929 in Bnai Israel Cemetery, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah. Burial: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Phillips&GSiman=1&GScid=77145&GRid=32434845&>

Grandparent

4. **Hirsch Isaac LESLAUER** was born in Inowrazlaw, Posen, Prussia [Germany]. He died before 1851 in Betsche, Prussia [Germany], now Pszczew, Poland.

Abraham GREENTHAL's descendants

- F i. **Mallie "Malca" GREENTHAL** was born about 1851 in New York, New York. Malca married **Samuel CASPAR**³⁵ on 30 Jan 1873 in New York, New York. Samuel was born about 1850 in New York, New York. Manhattan marriage certificate No. 1038, with wife listed as Malca Greenthal. She died before 1884.

Malca and Samuel had the following children.

- M i. **Isaac CASPAR** was born about 1873 in New York, New York.
M ii. **David CASPAR** was born about 1875 in New York, New York.
M iii. **Henry CASPAR** was born about 1877 in New York, New York.

- F ii. **Rachel "Ray" GREENTHAL** was born about 1852 in New York, New York.

F iii. **Frances GREENTHAL** was born about 1853 in New York, New York. Frances married **Benjamin AARON**, also known as Rudolph, son of **Isadore AARON** and Henrietta or Henriette on 20 August 1876 in New York, New York. See Manhattan marriage certificate, No. 5577, listing the husband as Rudolph Aaron. Rudolph was born about 1854 in New York, New York. He died on 23 December 1920 in New York, New York. He was buried in December 1920 in Bayside Cemetery, Ozone Park, Queens County, New York. Manhattan death certificate, No. 33006.

Isadore AARON was born about 1823 in Prussia [Germany]. Isadore married Henrietta (Henriette) about 1848. He died on 14 July 1892 in New York, New York. Manhattan death certificate, No. 25447. Henrietta was born about 1823 in Prussia [Germany]. She died on 6 December 1891 in New York, New York. Manhattan death certificate, No. 40642.

They had the following children.

- F i. **Regine AARON** was born about 1848 in Prussia [Germany].
M ii. **John AARON** was born about 1849 in New York, New York.

The following children may have had a different mother:

³⁵ See Chapter 7, n. 25, which may indicate that Samuel Caspar was also known as "Joe Parish." There may have been other variants of his name.

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M iii. **Benjamin AARON**, shown above, also called Rudolph, was born about 1854. He died on 23 December 1920.

F iv. **Minna AARON** was born about 1857 in New York, New York.

F v. **Sarah AARON** was born about December 1859 in New York, New York.

F vi. **Hattie AARON**, also called Harriette, was born about 1864 in New York, New York.

Frances and Rudolph had the following child:

F i. **Florence AARON** was born about 1874 in New York, New York.

M iv. **Isaac GREENTHAL** was born in August or September 1856 in New York, New York. He died on 3 September 1861 in West Hoboken, Hudson County, New Jersey. He was buried in September 1861 in Beth Israel Section, Salem Fields Cemetery, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York. Isaac never married.

F v. **Mary GREENTHAL** was born in April 1859 in New York, New York. She died on 28 August 1948 in New York, New York. She was buried in August 1948 in Mount Neboh Cemetery, Glendale, Queens County, New York. Manhattan death certificate, No. 19225. Mary married **Solomon MOSES**,³⁶ son of **Keeley MOSES**, sometimes spelled Kealey, and **Julia DAVIS**, on 14 February 1878 in New York, New York. Solomon was born in December 1850 in London, England, United Kingdom. He departed from London, England, with his family aboard the ship Palestine. He died before 1910.

Keeley "Kealey" MOSES was born about 1825 in Middlesex, St. Mary Whitechapel (civil parish), Ossulstone (Tower Division), Sub-registration District: Whitechapel North, 1841 Piece: 717, Book: 8, Folio: 29, Page Number: 25; another source gives his birthplace as Whitechapel, Middlesex, Enumeration District: 15, 1851 Household Schedule Number: 40, Piece: 1545. Folio: 345. Page Number: 15, in either case now London, England, United Kingdom. Immigrated to the USA from another country He died on 10 October 1893 in New York, New York. He was buried in October 1893. Kealey married Julia DAVIS about 1842 in London, England, United Kingdom. He departed from London, England, with his family aboard the ship Palestine. He was naturalized on 19 October 1868 in the Supreme Court, New York County, New York, Vol. 19, Record No. 327, No former nationality or date or port of arrival provided. He died on 10 October 1893 in New York, New York. See

³⁶ Solomon K. Moses was also known as Solomon Keeley. See Wednesday, 22 September 1886 *Long Island City Daily Star*, Long Island City, New York, Vol. XI, No. 3,213, p. 1, col. 6.

Genealogical Tables

Manhattan death certificate, No. 36211. He was buried on 11 October 1893 in Bayside Cemetery, Ozone Park, Queens County, New York.

Julia DAVIS was born about 1827 in Spitalfields, Middlesex, St. Mary Whitechapel (civil parish), now London, England, United Kingdom. The 1851 Registration District was Whitechapel, Sub-registration District: Whitechapel North, Enumeration District: 15, Household Schedule Number: 40, Piece: 1545, Folio: 345, Page Number: 15. She departed from London, England, with her family aboard the ship Palestine, arriving in New York, New York, on 14 April 1851.

Mary and Solomon had the following children.

M i. **Keeley MOSES** was born about 1878 in New York, New York.

M ii. **Harry MOSES** was born about 1879 in New York, New York.

Miii. **Nathan MOSES** was born on 3 April 1883 in New York, New York. See Manhattan birth certificate, No. 364629. He died on 24 February 1924 in New York, New York. Manhattan death certificate, No. 5509.

F iv. **Hattie MOSES** was born on 11 August 1887 in New York, New York. She died after 1940. Manhattan birth certificate, No. 497080.

M v. **Abraham MOSES** was born about 1891 in New York, New York.

M vi. **Keeley "Julius" MOSES** was born on 6 June 1893 in New York, New York. Manhattan birth certificate, No. 2258.

M vii. **Rudolph MOSES** was born on 14 July 1894 in New York, New York. He died in December 1965 in New York, New York. World War I army serial number 2,308,434. Drafted in New York, New York on 11 October 1917. Served in Company B, MG Battalion to November 1917; then 10th Company, 3 Battalion, 57th Dep Brigade to 23 January 1918; then Company B, 146th MG Battalion to 6 May 1918; then Company D, 102 MG Battalion until honorably discharged on 29 April 1919. Moderately wounded on 22 July 1918. Served overseas from 12 March 1918 to 17 April 1919. SSN: 059-12-7019.

M viii. **William "Willie" MOSES** was born on 23 August 1895 in New York, New York. Manhattan birth certificate, No. 34523. Alternatively, shown as born on 23 April 1900. Manhattan birth certificate, No. 18026. He died on 31 August 1895 in New York, New York. Manhattan death certificate, No. 30800. Willie never married.

M ix. **Julius MOSES** was born about 1897 in New York, New York.

Keeley Moses and Julia Davis had the following children:

F i. **Dinah MOSES** was born about 1843 in St. Georges, Surrey, England, United Kingdom. The civil parish was St. Mary Whitechapel, Middlesex, Registration District: Whitechapel, Sub-registration District: Whitechapel North, Enumeration District: 15,

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Household Schedule Number: 40, Piece: 1545, Folio: 345, Page Number: 15. She departed with her family from London, England, with her family aboard the ship Palestine, arriving in New York, New York, on 14 April 1851.

M ii. **Joseph MOSES** was born about December 1848. Volume for the Date of Registration: October-November-December 1850, Registration District: Whitechapel, now London, England, United Kingdom. Volume: 2, Page: 677. Another source gives the birth information as born in Whitechapel, Middlesex, in the civil parish of St. Mary, Whitechapel, 1851 Registration District: Whitechapel, Sub-registration District: Whitechapel North, Enumeration District: 15, Household Schedule Number: 40, Piece: 1545, Folio: 345, Page Number: 15. He departed from London, England, with his family aboard the ship Palestine, arriving in New York, New York, on 14 April 1851.

M iii. **John MOSES** was born about 1849 in London, England, United Kingdom. He departed from London, England, with his family aboard the ship Palestine, arriving in New York, New York, on 14 April 1851.

M iv. **Solomon MOSES** was born in December 1850. He died before 1910.

F v. **Elizabeth "Lizzie" MOSES** was born about 1859 in New York, New York.

M vi. **Maurice MOSES** was born about 1861 in New York, New York.

F vii. **Hester MOSES** was born about 1862 in New York, New York.

Fviii. **Phoebe MOSES** was born about 1865 in New York, New York.

M ix. **Alexander Keeley MOSES** was born on 5 November 1867 in New York, New York. U. S. Passport 419189, issued 9 May 1924, with photograph.

M x. **Benjamin MOSES** was born about 1868 in New York, New York.

F xi. **Sarah MOSES** was born about February 1870 in New York, New York.

The parents of the previous generation and their children

Moses MOSES married Elizabeth. **Elizabeth** was born about 1811 in London, England, United Kingdom. She was born in Middlesex, in the civil parish of St. Mary, Whitechapel, in Ossulstone (Tower Division), Registration District: Whitechapel, Sub-registration District: Whitechapel North, 1841 Piece: 717, Book: 8, Folio: 29, Page Number: 25.

They had the following children.

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M i. **Keeley "Kealey" MOSES** was born about 1825. He died on 10 October 1893. See above.

M ii. **Moses MOSES** was born about 1828 in Middlesex, in the civil parish of St. Mary Whitechapel, Ossulstone (Tower Division), Registration District: Whitechapel, Sub-registration District: Whitechapel North, 1841 Piece: 717, Book: 8, Folio: 29, Page Number: 25, now London, England, United Kingdom

Joseph DAVIS was born about 1797 in England, United Kingdom. Joseph married Dinah. He departed from London, England, with his family aboard the ship Palestine and arrived on 14 April 1851 in New York, New York. **Dinah** was born about 1799 in St. Georges, Surrey, England, United Kingdom, in the civil parish of St. Mary, Whitechapel, in the County of Middlesex, 1851 Registration District: Whitechapel, Sub-registration District: Whitechapel North, Enumeration District: 15, Household Schedule Number: 40, Piece: 1545, Folio: 345, Page Number: 15. She departed from London, England, with her family aboard the ship Palestine and arrived on 14 April 1851 in New York, New York.

Joseph and Dinah Davis had the following children:

M i. **Henry DAVIS** was born about 1825 in London, England, United Kingdom. He departed from London, England, with his family aboard the ship Palestine and arrived on 14 April 1851 in New York, New York.

F ii. **Julia DAVIS** was born about 1827. See above.

F iii. **Susan DAVIS** was born about 1828 in London, England, United Kingdom. She departed from London, England, with her family aboard the ship Palestine and arrived on 14 April 1851 in New York, New York. She had a son, Joseph, born about 1849 in London, England, United Kingdom, and he immigrated with her.

F iv. **Elizabeth DAVIS** was born about 1831 in London, England, United Kingdom. She departed from London, England, with her family aboard the ship Palestine and arrived on 14 April 1851 in New York, New York.

Ewa Hannah LESLAUER and her descendants

First Generation

1. **Ewa Hannah LESLAUER**, called Hannah, was born on 6 August 1833 in Betsche, Prussia [Germany], now Pszczew, Poland. She died on 8 August 1929 in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah. Hannah married **Moses Casper PHILLIPS** in 1860 in New York, New York. Moses was born on 10 December 1828 in Verballen, Poland, Russia, now Virbalis, Marijampole County, Lithuania. There were Filipowskis and Pilipowskis in Virbalis before 1918. M. C. Phillips registered for the Civil War draft in Scott River, Northern Congressional District in California. He was age 34 on 1 July 1863. Class 1; 38th subdistrict. Compiled in October, November, and December 1863 and January 1864 under Capt. W. H. Parks, Provost Marshal. No. 34, line 10. Retrieved on <http://www.Ancestry.com/>. They arrived in San Francisco, California via the Isthmus of Panama in 1872. He died on 15 October 1913 in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah. His death was reported : <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045396/1913-10-16/ed-1/seq-16/#date1=1912&index=0&rows=20&words=Verballen&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Utah&date2=1914&proxtext=Verballen&y=-221&x=-1220&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1/>. She was buried in August 1929 in Bnai Israel Cemetery, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah. See <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Phillips&GSiman=1&GScid=77145&Grid=32434845&/>. He was buried on 17 October 1913 in Bnai Israel Cemetery, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah in Plot East-F-16.

Hannah and Moses had the following children.

F i. **Leah PHILLIPS** was born about 1860.

M ii. **Harris (Harry) PHILLIPS** was born in 1861 in California. He died on 17 June 1933 in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah. He was buried in June 1933 in Bnai Israel Cemetery, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah. Death: State File Number: 1933002260. Burial: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Phillips&GSiman=1&GScid=77145&GRid=32434839&> Burial Plot: East-F-15.

Harry married **Elizabeth PERDEW**, known as Lizzie, daughter of **Asbury L. PERDEW** and **Ann E. POPE**, called Annie, on 24 April 1888 in Los Angeles County, California. Lizzie was born on 23 March 1868 in California. She died in 1913.

Asbury L. PERDEW was born on 19 August 1835 in Ohio. He died on 27 September 1879 in San Bernardino County, San Bernardino County, California. He was buried in September 1879 in Pioneer Memorial Cemetery, San Bernardino, San Bernardino County, California. Burial: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=36454992/>. Asbury married **Ann E.**

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POPE, known as Annie, daughter of **Samuel E. POPE** and **Mary Ann TRICKEY**, in June 1860 in Burlington, Des Moines County, Iowa. Annie was born on 27 June 1841 in Hillsboro, Highland County, Ohio. She died on 28 June 1913 in San Bernardino, San Bernardino County, California. She was buried in July 1913 in Pioneer Memorial Cemetery, San Bernardino, San Bernardino County, California. Burial: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=PERD&GSpartial=1&GSbyrel=all&GSst=6&GSctry=4&GSsr=1&GRid=36455069&/>. Plot: Block 3-2-3.

They had the following children.

- F i. **Martha (Mattie) PERDEW** was born about 1864 in Iowa.
- F ii. **Harriett PERDEW** was born about 1866 in California.
- F iii. **Elizabeth (Lizzie) PERDEW** was born on 23 March 1868 in California. Lizzie married **Harris PHILLIPS**, shown above. She died in 1913.
- M iv. **Robert Lee PERDEW** was born about 1871 in California.
- M v. **Lester PERDEW** was born about 1873 in California.
- M vi. **Otto PERDEW** was born about 1876 in California.

Samuel E. POPE was born about 1819 in Scotland, United Kingdom. He died before 1869. Samuel married **Mary Ann TRICKEY**, who was born about 1819 in Virginia. They had the following children:

- F i. **Ann E. "Annie" POPE** was born on 27 June 1841. She died on 28 June 1913.
- M ii. **Lowell Everett POPE** was born on 2 April 1848 in Burlington, Des Moines County, Iowa. During the Civil War, he served in Company D, 2nd Iowa Infantry. Lowell first married **Clara ROZELL** on 9 July 1914 in Sherman, Sherman County, Nebraska. Lowell later married **Sarah BEESON**, daughter of **Ephraim BEESON** and **Catherine KOCHER**, on 22 August 1874. Sarah was born on 9 April 1850 in Osceola, St. Clair County, Missouri. She died on 24 March 1916 and was buried in Hamburg Cemetery, Hamburg, Fremont County, Iowa. Sarah later married **Leonard R. BURROWS**, born in 1845 in New York. Leonard's father was **William BURROWS** whose wife was **Parmelia**. **Lowell POPE** died on 16 November 1926 and was buried on 19 November 1926 in G. A. R. Circle, Forest Lawn Cemetery, Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska.
- M iii. **George W. POPE** was born about 1853 in Burlington, Des Moines County, Iowa.
- M iv. **Samuel M. POPE** was born about 1855 in Burlington, Des Moines County, Iowa.

Samuel E. POPE's father, **George POPE**, was born in 1789. His father, **Samuel POPE**, was born in 1731 in New Garden, Guilford County, North Carolina. He died on 10 February 1818 in Clear Creek, Ashland County, Ohio. He was buried in February 1818 in High Top Cemetery, Penn Township, Highland County, Ohio. Samuel married **Martha OVERMAN**, who was born on 23 February 1753. She died on 13 February 1830. She was buried in High Top Cemetery, Penn Township, Highland County, Ohio. **Samuel POPE's** father, **Nathaniel POPE** was born in 1680 in

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Scotland, United Kingdom. He died in 1730 in England, United Kingdom. Nathaniel married **Mary ALBON** in 1720. She was born in 1700. They had the following children:

F i. **Priscilla POPE** was born in 1722 in Huntington, York County, Pennsylvania. She died in 1770 in Latimore, York County, Pennsylvania.

M ii. **Samuel POPE**, shown above.

Harris PHILLIPS and **Elizabeth PERDEW** were the parents of one child:

F iii. **Frances PHILLIPS** was born in Nov 1864 in California. She died in 1930 in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah. She was buried in 1930 in Bnai Israel Cemetery, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah.

F iv. **Matilda PHILLIPS** was born in Nov 1866 in Nevada. She died in 1963 in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah and was buried in 1963 in Bnai Israel Cemetery, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah. Burial: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Phillips&GSiman=1&GScid=77145&GRid=32434857>&

Second Generation

2. **Leah PHILLIPS** (Ewa Hannah) was born about 1860 in California. Leah married **Louis HYAMS**. They had the following children.

M i. **Chester Phillips HYAMS**.

M ii. **Harold Francis HYAMS**.

M iii. **Leland Gilbert HYAMS**.

Afterword

The second half of the 19th century was one of the most corrupt periods in American history. One has only to look at the Tweed Ring in New York City to understand that. It took the reports of the disgruntled County Sheriff James O'Brien, who gave his information to the *New York Times* when his efforts to blackmail the Ring failed to bring that Ring down.¹ It should be noted that Mayor A. Oakley Hall had been directly involved in the most notorious activities of the Ring, and this was the same A. Oakley Hall who appeared to defend The General at his trial in the Court of General Sessions of the Peace on 6 March 1873. The Wikipedia article, cited in the footnote, makes a point of stating that the judiciary in the City of New York was also under Tweed's influence. Perhaps it is worth noting that in light of the scandal involving Justice Cardozo in the Tammany Hall judicial corruption scandal, sparked by the Erie Railway takeover wars, it may well be true that he was involved in bribery in the Lawrence case discussed in Chapter 4.²

There is a Wikipedia article with The General's photograph, but except for that photograph, the article is almost categorically wrong on its alleged facts. It is to correct these errors that this study was originally undertaken. The writer of that Wikipedia article himself or herself realized the error as to Abraham's date of death. So why rely upon the principal source for the Wikipedia article in offering other information about the subject of the article? Other sources on the web provide accurate information. Why not use them? This project corrects those errors by relying upon original and not secondary sources.

The study has for the first time put together a biography, with an extensive bibliography, on Abraham Greenthal, noting his numerous aliases and his incarcerations as well as his adventures. The adventures read like a picaresque novel although all of the information is taken from public sources and is very likely to be true (other than the lies which we know that Abraham told). His adventures include thefts and travels to Berlin, Liverpool, New York City, New Jersey, Rio de Janeiro, numerous cities in the eastern United States, and to some unknown location in Germany. They include a civil lawsuit in which Abraham tried to regain any property rights he had in his pew and burial rights and the right to worship in his congregation. He lost and yet managed to effectively retain those rights. He also successfully escaped on his way to prison in Prussia as detailed in a newspaper interview of his exploits. His family life comes through in the story. He always learned from his errors even though he made many. He tells how he lost the trust of his neighbors on account of a theft, how he gave to charity, how he, at about age 68, married a girl of 18 years of age, and many other events. There was never a dull moment in his household. In prison he managed to bamboozle a governor of the State of New York into commuting his sentence to time served. This was not just any governor but one who went on to become President of the United States.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_M._Tweed/. See Chapter 6, nn. 19 and 24, for more on Mayor Hall.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Cardozo

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It is against this background that we must measure Abraham and his career. Perhaps the most interesting and puzzling issue with respect to Abraham Greenthal is the question of why he did not see that with his obvious managerial and administrative skills, he would not have been better off over the long run in engaging in a legitimate business. After all, he must have spent at least half his life in prison, resulting in a great loss of earning power. Today Abraham could have written a tell-all book on his career or earned money as a consultant to prevent the very things that he did. In Abraham's day, his choices were probably more limited. We know that the pickpocketing school operators in Betsche exported tools for crime to Latin America. With Abraham's travel experience and knowledge of foreign languages as well as administrative skills, perhaps he could have made good money if at a slower rate and with less excitement in the import-export business.

The two most likely reasons for Abraham leading a life of crime are that pickpocketing and related theft, receiving stolen goods, *etc.* was the family business, and he knew no other and that he too greatly prized the thrill of the theft, getting something for nothing at the expense of another whom he viewed as a "pigeon." Abraham seems never to have set his sights on a higher plane, always viewing himself as a leader in crime but never as one of the leaders of society, despite moving in some of those circles on occasion, such as when he attended Mother Mandelbaum's dinners. There he might well have rubbed elbows with mayors, other high-ranking city politicians, the upper ranks of policemen, and many others among the city's elite.

I strongly suspect that Abraham bitterly resented the lack of his father who was in prison from the time that Abraham was only eight years old. In addition to the criminal's natural view of governmental authority as being the enemy, which would have been reinforced by the family, Abraham surely resented bitterly what the governmental authority had done to him by depriving him of his father. He clearly was a gang leader who had no problem in attracting like-minded followers who brought him a steady supply of stolen goods, augmenting the resources which he himself acquired by theft. Given that his family paid \$13 for a stolen \$250 watch, the margin for profit was considerable. Nevertheless, The General had little trouble in finding soldiers to work for him as what today would be called "independent contractors." Thieves have a reputation for being independent, after all.

As a young boy of eight years, Abraham would have learned his skills from the family and from other criminals in Betsche, the family hometown. I was never able to confirm that Abraham attended the school for thieves there or that he ran such a school in any other place where he lived.

The General's exploits almost seem to have been unplanned reactions to events rather than the initiation of events, almost but not quite, of course. He did initiate the thefts but when caught, he always sought to blame others in some fashion, such as when he accused Samuel Meyer of rape when The General was caught in a theft. He seems to have made up his reactions as he went along and was often not successful in promulgating those reactions but always learned from his mistakes. When all else failed, bribery was the most successful instrument in his arsenal. It is interesting to

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note that Abraham never had anyone murdered, shot, stabbed, or even greatly roughed up, except as a means of immediate physical escape. He never carried a gun, a knife, a cudgel, or any other weapon. When he did use violence, it was only to use as much as he needed to try to escape after having been caught.

As to Abraham's marriage to an 18-year-old in 1885 when Abraham was age 63, it is hard to believe that an 18-year-old orphan was so gullible as to believe the old man and yet so perspicacious a few years later to sue for an annulment. She claims that she was an orphan but had obviously retained a good attorney. Divorce was not a possibility in New York under the law of that era. A careful reading of the facts shows that his second wife Rawley asked for an annulment on the grounds of deception, which is probably why the facts were presented as they were. Given Abraham's ways, it seems likely that Rawley was herself from a criminal family although there is no proof of that. Nevertheless, the fact that they were married by an Irish alderman with an Irish and a Dutch witness in a civil ceremony rather than in a religious one is quite suspicious. There is no evidence that Rawley's name is real and no evidence of a religious ceremony. She probably believed that she was marrying a man who would provide handsomely for her as a good earner and die while she was still young enough to remarry. When it was discovered that The General was going to jail, had no money left, and lacked any kind of support from his daughters because of the marriage to an 18-year-old, Rawley decided to seek an annulment so that she could have another marriage to a better provider. Clearly, she was successful in her suit, and there is no evidence that The General was able to have the case reopened. Nevertheless, the General's death certificate lists him as married at the time of his death, probably indicating that he considered himself still married to his second wife. Rawley is not recorded as having married again in New York City, most likely because she used another alias.

We have to wonder why Abraham never mentioned his children and in particular his deceased son in the October 1871 interview in *The Sun*. The mention of the daughters was left to the reporter. Was the subject too sensitive, and if so, in what way? Did Abraham wish to keep the interview focused on himself with only a fleeting mention of his wife? Was the death of his young son Isaac just too painful a memory to dredge up? Were daughters not a fit subject to be mentioned by an Orthodox Jew in an interview with a newspaper reporter? We can only speculate. What is clear is that Abraham's daughters clearly were devoted to him, especially Mally and Rachel, and that Abraham was likely faithful to his wife until her 1876 death, an event which tested the word of the synagogue that he had just sued. The synagogue was as good as its word since his wife was buried in the plot of the Beth Israel Section of Salem Fields Cemetery on Tuesday, 5 September 1876, just over three months after the trial ended in Abraham losing his case.

Abraham consistently used his first name in all cases but had no problem changing his last name at will in the United States. Prussian law did not allow name changes without court permission, which was almost never granted until after the end of the German Empire. However, American law, based upon the English common law, allows name changes without court intervention as long as the

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purpose of the name change is not to defraud or cause shame or a lack of respect for a minor's parentage. Since Abraham was so well known that even when he used a false name, he was soon discovered to be "Abraham Greenthal," he was never prosecuted for fraud with respect to a change of name. However, he sometimes did complain about his bad reputation and changed his name from Greenthal to Myers because of it.

Perhaps Abraham, in keeping with his religious beliefs, used the following reasoning. Above all, Abraham saw himself as a family man and was loyal to family. His parents gave him the name Abraham in accordance with Jewish religious custom, and he therefore was loathe to change it. On the other hand, surnames were given by the state, whether Prussia or some other country. Abraham saw such state entities as a hindrance to business affairs and had no compunction whatsoever in cheating the state or thumbing his nose at it. Accordingly, he used Woolf, Brown, and other aliases, whenever it suited him to do so, and he felt no discomfort or shame in changing his surname.

One must wonder what was going through The General's mind on the Day of Atonement, the holiest day in the Hebrew calendar, in which all observant Jews pray for forgiveness for their sins during the past year. Did he ever seriously consider giving up the only profession that he knew and had practiced since he was age eight years old? That seems quite doubtful. Perhaps he assuaged his conscience with his charitable contributions. It should be clear, however, that compared to his income, The General made relatively small contributions to the synagogue even though the gifts were large in absolute terms in light of their value during that period.

Toward the end of his life The General boasted that he had never done an honest day's work in his entire life. He seems to have been genuinely proud of that fact. On the other hand, he was a religious Jew, entailing his obeying 613 Commandments³ in the Holy Scriptures. Abraham obeyed eight of the 10 Commandments, just not the prohibitions on stealing and coveting that which belonged to his neighbors. What we can say is that no one is perfect and 80% obedience to those Commandments is a better score than most achieve. In addition to the religious conflict over violation of at least two commandments, those against stealing and coveting, we have to wonder how Abraham saw Jewish crime. He clearly was in the synagogue to pray on the Sabbath along with his wife and probably his daughters as well.

Surely, Abraham's daughters thought him the ideal father, as reference to the October 1871 *Sun* article shows. The daughters were brought up in luxury and were keen to defend their father against all harmful allegations. A look at the story in *The Sun* dated Sunday, 28 May 1876, and entitled "Must a Church Member Be Moral" easily demonstrates filial support. Mally and Rachel were particularly active, as noted above, in championing their father's cause. See Chapter 8. With respect to Eva, Abraham's sister, and her age and the name by which she was generally known,

³ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613_commandments

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Hannah, rather than Eva, it is as though Eva sought to reinvent herself. We may speculate that Eva shaved ten years off her age to make herself more attractive in her own eyes or in the eyes of her husband. There is no evidence that Moses C. Philips, her husband, knew his wife's real age. In fact, they were about the same age. Given what we know about Abraham, it is not surprising that Eva had no problem with altering the facts.

Abraham's life ended quietly. *Sic transit gloria mundi*: Thus passes glory from the world. At least, that is a likely scenario for how Abraham saw himself. And after his death, except by his family, he was soon forgotten except by a few who knew him personally.

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