



### 0.13 Meanwhile in America

Harry: When I came to this country I went to visit Uncle Aaron. He wanted me to go out with him. We went to a farmer.

The farmer, and his wife and 2 daughters came out to look. "How (you doing?)" The farmer asked "what are you doing with that youngster?"

Aaron said "he just come."

He said "don't keep him as a junk man:" I guess I was too young, too clean.

There was a store in Bellville. They offered you a bag and you went out peddling. So me and one of the landsmann who was between seasons went out together. They gave us two bags. Naturally you start walking out of town. You find a farm house. You open up your bag. You come by at dinner time and the farmer wants to give you something to eat. I remember he cut up a sausage and put in on your plate. And it's a disgrace if you don't eat. So you take in a piece of sausage, and you have to throw up. The landsmann was here a year before I come. He couldn't talk English. But you go out in the country.



The second day we went out and we saw it's not good. So we returned the bag.

We sold \$5 or \$6 worth. The man at the store told us to keep the money. He didn't take stock. The landsmann went back and his job came back.

Harry: When I come I went to East Glen, making rain coats. When I come I had 2 lands boys. One was in one plant and the other was at another company.

Both making rain coats. At home I was able to help mother with the sewing machine she bought. She'd feed the cloth, the shirts and so on and I'd turn that wheel. When she went to the stove I'd feed and turn the wheel. So I was

acquainted with a sewing machine.

So they give me a sewing machine. And it's electric. They give you a sleeve to seam it. So I put the sleeve up and I put my foot down and the sleeve goes (shooting through).

So the foreman sees my landsmann go to the cutter to get a replacement on the sleeve. And he gets a hold of him and he comes to me. He says you have, (he was guessing) more than a butcher hand. We can't use you.

So when I got home the other landsmann says "Our place is hiring."

Harry: So I already know what I did. So I was light on my feet (the second time.) So I get to the other place, and I'm careful enough to (get the job.)

So they give me a machine. And we had a girl from my town and a man from my town, and this landsmann was a cutter. There was 3 people from our town. They were across the way and I was making sleeves. So how long does it take to run through sleeves? If you run through it right (it goes fast.)

One had to seam the coat, another had to put in the collar, another had to put in the sleeve.

Harry: So I produced too many sleeves. So the foreman comes to me and says you better make the seams on the coat. So they give me a pack of sleeves and a pack of seams. And I was producing (so fast) they couldn't put in the collars and seams fast enough, those 2 people. So they called me "mule."

I said "what do you mean, mule? That machine geht alain (goes alone)." You put your foot down and it goes.

So the foreman comes to me and says, "Why don't you learn to put in sleeves?" So what they didn't finish in sleeves I was putting sleeves in. So he says "don't you know how to put collars in?" So pretty soon I was the tailor over there and they called me mule and they couldn't make the seams fast enough.



Then I went on the job where I could make money because this job only paid \$6 a week plus overtime \$1.50.

Harry: While I was in St. Louis I had a real nice break in the early months. First I went out and tried to peddle. These lands boys we had over here worked making raincoats. During the summer wasn't the season. So early in the season they peddled too. One evening, when I was making raincoats, instead of working overtime for the raincoat company, I snuck out. I heard there's a place where they're working at night and they need workers. It's piece work for the Russian army. Bags that they carry like women do here. They had their dish and their spoon and their gun; and those bags were prepared with 3 pockets out of ....you know. I heard there's a place where you could work at night and make pretty good money. I went to their shop. When I came to their freight elevator there were 40 or 50 people that wanted to get upstairs where they could be hired. And I was strong enough to break through. When I got up there naturally they give you a machine, and they gave you enough material for a dozen bags, to finish them. They gave you pieces cut to size and you had to close them in. The first night when I got through I made \$1.80. (Over there I made... \$7).

The next day I got back to the raincoat factory and they asked me 'where were you last night?'

I said 'last night I made more money than I do here in two days.'

'What are you going to do tonight?'

'I'm going back.'

Harry: The first night the one who handed out the material and needles.. (saw that) I'd give it back to her (fast.) So she'd give me two dozen and a box of needles, so when I broke one I wouldn't have to come back to her. The second night she gave me two dozen. And the first thing you knew I brought it back. So she gave me 3 dozen. So there were a lot at a time. So I finished the 3 dozen and she gave me credit. And one of the bosses walked around to check. They were anxious to get the job done because they had a limited time. And they see I got 3 dozen. So they go to the floor lady to complain. 'Why doesn't he turn in the work?'

She says 'he produces 4 times as much as anyone else. A dozen doesn't last him nothing.'

So they came back and asked me 'what do you do during the day?'

I said I worked for so and so.

They said 'we want you to come here.'

I said 'no machine here.'

'For you we got machine.'

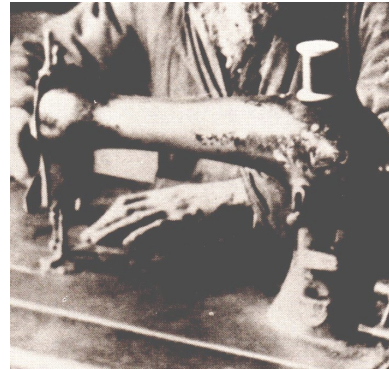
So I quit over there and I came there. Dave was already shoemaking in Bellville. When the job was completed I had \$350. So I went to visit Brother Dave in Collinsville.

Dave: "When Harry came over we got him a job at a concern that made

raincoats.(Liepson). That concern calls themselves, today, the alligator coat company. By

August or September, after Russia got into the war, there was a demand for equipment for soldiers, which meant the bags that soldiers carry material with them to the front. Harry got himself a job through the alligator company, which they had taken in a contract from some big contractors to make bags. He worked 16 hours a day and he made between \$50 and \$75 a week, which was big money those days. And it didn't take us long.

I was already working at the wheels; at Kessler we had saved \$800-\$1000 which was big savings in those days.



Dave: By spring, which was 1915 I quit making wheels, and I came to Collinsville with the intention of learning some kind of business. A man by the name of Tannenbaum, in Bellville, talked me in to learning how to fix shoes, and by doing that I could open a shoemaker shop, and also take in a stock of shoes, which helped me get into the shoe business. However, until I got work for him to learn shoe repairs, I peddled through a man by the name Stein who owned a dry goods store; and he was willing to give peddlers a bundle of goods to go out and peddle and learn how to go out and get acquainted with people, to learn how to sell.

After I worked at that a couple of months I came to him and worked for 6 weeks to learn how to fix shoes. I then moved into Collinsville and opened a shoe repair shop. Summer of 1915 a relative of my mothers who lived in Collinsville, Ike Schwartz, talked me into buying out his stock of groceries instead, and to get into business through the trade he had in the grocery business, instead. That's how I got my start in business."

Harry: "So we had a cousin in Collinsville who was first in the grocery business and later in the furniture business. He had a shelf of groceries there, and he still had a few customers who came there. When I came Dave introduced me. And my cousin looked me over. And he said 'go get me three stamps.'

**1915 stamp**

I didn't know what stamps were

'At the post office.'

'Post office?' I said, 'where?'

"Gey dorten and sehen Post Hoffice; and give money. For 10¢ you get three stamps, and you get a penny change.' "

Harry: "So I go and I bring in the stamps; and he likes me.

And he says 'how about you buying' . . he knew we had a little money . . .and taking over that grocery area?'



Dave didn't do any good on the shoes, and he decided to take over the grocery area. After we were there for a week and a half he said 'you have to move it out.' after all it was a furniture store. He has to do business.

Harry: So we rented a store on Clay Street below Main. We moved in the groceries. The few customers we had, I used to deliver. Some of them had borders, In those days, and would buy a bit of canned goods.

When Dave wasn't around and they came in for canned goods and they wanted hominy. I went to the shelf. I said, "Hominy, hominy, hominy?" He says 'here it is.' On those basis I was able to take the order. And when Dave showed up I went out to deliver. So that went on for a while and pretty soon there wasn't enough to keep us busy. We only had a couple of dozen customers. Not everybody bought quantity. Several only needed \$1.50 or \$2. If this one needed \$12 that was a lot of groceries. Three cans of sour kraut, 6 cans of corn, and so forth. So Dave says we need more business. We need to go out and do soliciting. He went out to do soliciting. We had a lead works in Collinsville. We had a couple of colored families who lived in houses that the lead works built. Dave went in that direction. And while he was there he went to pick on the fancy houses where the owners and the bosses lived. He'd get orders for onions and things we didn't have in the grocery store. So we had to go and buy it. And when we got it we couldn't charge more than the other grocery stores were selling it for. So it went on maybe a week. Whatever he did he was upset because it wasn't anything off the shelf. He was upset. He's not going anymore. And you sit around and do nothing.

Harry: "I said, 'I'll tell you what. I'll go out and solicit; because I knew where a few of my customers in the Polish neighborhood and Russian neighborhood lived. We had a few customers who

were Polish. And one of them had a big family. And we got acquainted after a couple of weeks. Their name was Adee. So instead of going on that street I went to another street. And I knocked on the door.

A woman came to the window. "What you want, what you want? What you want?" She was Italian.

'I want Adee, a customer, Adee.'

'Me Italian. What you want, what you want, what you want?'

'We got a grocery store.'

'I come. I buy.'

'I still want to know someone I can talk to. 'You come and buy, we got. We got.' So I went around.

Other people they understood American but they didn't understand me. So they pointed out the Polish.. 'there's a Polish family there.'

So I go to the Polish family. And then I'm a landsmann.

'So where's your store. We'll come.'

'We got customers like Adee, and so and so. But that's not enough. We're two brothers and we got to do business.'

So they pointed out some other families.

And when I got through, it was 3 days; I brought in people who used to feed hogs and cows. We used to go to the livery stable and buy feed. And pretty soon we got busy. We did some business.

Harry: "So this Italian woman come and they were miners. And pretty soon... she had 3 girls and a boy... she got to be a steady customer. She liked the way I talked. So pretty soon we were making it. So we had a customer, not the cousin, who was in the furniture business. He saw they were busy. We didn't have any money to buy furniture stock. We didn't have a store to buy any furniture stock. We bought some stoves before the winter and polished them up. A cook stove or a heating stove. For the heating stove we went to Bellville. We bought a horse and wagon. Re carried a bigger load but he couldn't make any time.

But we had time. We went on Sunday. Brung down a lot. Cleaned them up. So our customers: "Oh...so.." We fixed them. So pretty soon the neighbor across the way..

Harry: "The neighbor across the street had the saloon. On the corner was the tavern, and then on Church street, which was in back of the tavern, he had a son that went into the grocery business. And he put in a nice store. And this neighbor comes across, the old man, and he says boys, you should go into a new furniture business. These neighbors of yours (Schwartz) are doing good, and there's more for you to do'

'We have no store.

'I'll build one.'

'How are you going to build us a store? We have no money to offer.'

'I'll charge you rent, reasonable, and I'll build a store.'

And it didn't take him 2 months to build a beautiful building. At that time it was war time. The cousin of ours had a furniture business, a grocery business, and he had a little haberdashery; and he wanted to cash it in; so we took it over.'

We had a big store. So we had to go to St. Louis to buy furniture.

We hung everything up.

We had an acquaintance, a veteran from the Civil War. And he used to come and sit around and talk to us. And he liked the way we were working. So pretty soon he sees some of his neighbors, a young couple waiting for the street car. So he asked them where are you going?'





They were going to St. Louis to buy furniture.

So he called out Dave. He says 'Let me get you acquainted. They're going in to buy furniture. Do you have any suggestions?'

'Yes, we'll take them in to the wholesale house.'

So he took them in to the wholesale house. That was our first furniture sale to speak of. Of course we were already sellin small pieces, a dresser or a chest. But Dave took them in, and they bought \$900

worth. Of course through the wholesale house you didn't make a big profit. But it was a big sale. This old man, Favas, his daughter was a grocery customer; and he just loved to bring in customers; anybody he'd see he'd talk to and say 'why don't you go in and do business with these boys?'

That's how we got into the furniture business.

Dave: "through this Schwartz I started in the grocery business in the spring of the year and talked Harry into going into business with me. We worked at it for close to a year. Which ran into 1916. At night we used to go over to Schwartz and help them set up furniture. And we got ourselves acquainted with the furniture business."

Dave: We then talked him into give us half his stock, which we needed. About \$8000. He furnished \$4000 and we furnished \$4000, and we started the furniture business. And we were in the furniture business and also in the grocery business.

Marching with broomsticks world war one (an archived picture)-

Dave: About 6 months later I talked Schwartz into selling his share. And he did at a profit of \$3000, which we paid him out in payments.

At that time we talked in Mr. Baha, and he built us a building, and we ran the furniture and groceries from there. Which was about 1917.

Harry: "I registered with the U.S. Army. I thought I was old enough. I didn't go by my papers that said I was 2 years younger. We were already in the grocery and furniture business. The sergeant was a big fellow. We didn't have guns. We had broomsticks. We were in Collinsville. We marched on Church St., back and forth, 14 or 15





boys. I was a pretty good marcher. The sergeant felt sorry for me. He knew I left a lot of merchandise on the sidewalk that had to be taken in. So he says, 'Come a little later. But when you come get into the march, wherever we are. The reason why we couldn't go to camp is because the camp had a sickness. So we were training under orders in Collinsville. Then the war ended. Before the war ended you could enlist. So one of my boyfriends, a butcher's son said 'let's go enlist.'

I said 'No, I don't have time to go to the army. I'm too busy. He was close to his father but he wasn't involved (in business.) So he enlisted. He had a wife and 2 children that he left in Collinsville.

I had to buy them ice cream after. But he was in the army for 18 months before he got out. My number was there, to that particular camp,

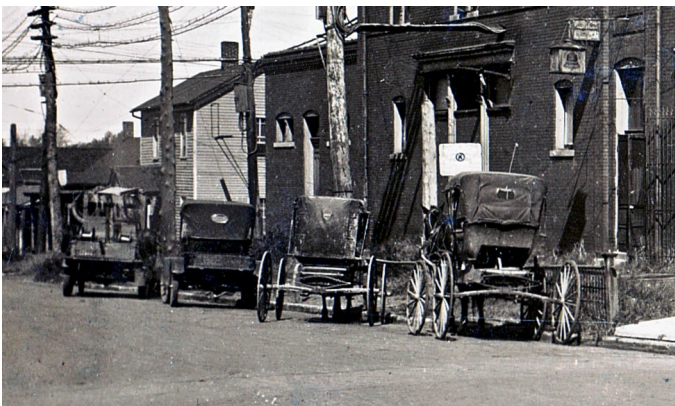
But that camp had a sickness, and the war was going on. But I was soldiering. Some of the customers had young boys; and they was soldiering with me; Whenever I come with the groceries we talked about getting to the army and about what we'll do to the Germans. They were about to shoot. So they put up cans in trees and shot. So I never had a gun.

'We' ll give you a gun.

So he gave me a gun, and I looked at it. and I shot that can out.

'You're fooling us.' So they had it in for me that 'I pushed out a bullet for nothing.

Collinsville Illinois 1932 when building housed State Bank, before it was Fredman Bros.



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