

Last Will and Testament: Unraveling the Hymes-Prince Family of South Carolina

By Judy Archer

In 2004, I posted an inquiry to the JewishGen Early American SIG Digest. To my surprise I received an email from another Hyams/Prince researcher. Late in 2004, I started to track down other Hymes/Prince family researchers to share findings and to take the process further. This research summary is a result of the combined efforts of Robert Prince, Jameila Prince Al-Hujazi, Vicki Barkoff, Edie Robinson and Mark and Mildred Cohn.

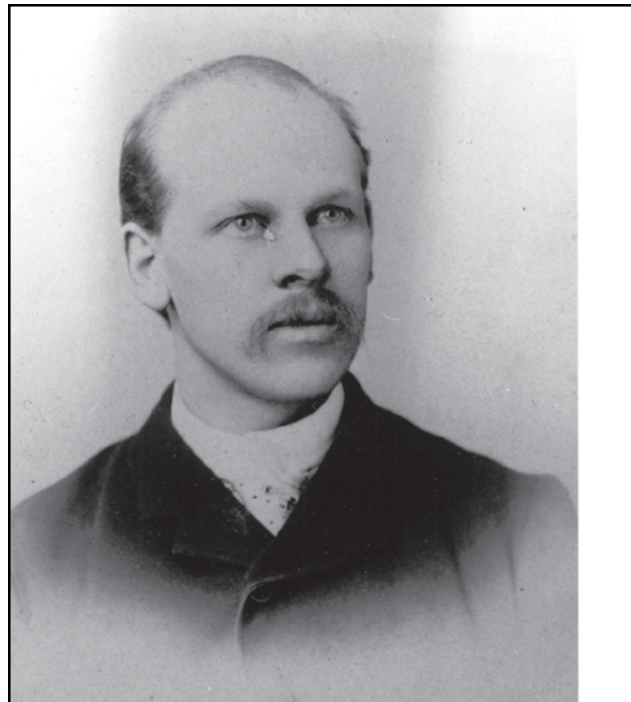
Curiosity, mystery and family drama ran through the search for the roots of the Sarah Prince family. My great grandmother Sarah Alice Elizabeth Prince Archer wrote in a letter (May 24, 1912) to her sister-in-law Maud Higginbotham Prince:

I know how you feel about (not) being able to tell the children about their Father's people, as you are about your ancestors. I wish I had time to tell you all I know—but perhaps a little outline would help. Of the Prince family we only know that they had some official or noble position in Poland and were exiled about 1835 or 1836. Our Father (Samuel) was born in Portsmouth, England, July 4, 1836 on the journey to America. His Father saved much (in jewels etc. I believe) from his former wealth and accumulated more—but.... because of a terrible separation between their Father & Mother [Sarah Hyams and George Prince]—our Father [Samuel] was disinherited.

Pooling Research Discoveries

It is often so hard to find out information and the sources often give contradictory information. Great-great-great-great grandmother, Sarah Hymes Prince, emigrated from Warsaw, Poland to Charleston, South Carolina by way of Portsmouth (England) where her second husband, George Prince, left her with three children and sailed for America after 1835. What is her story? What happened to Hyams (Hymes)? This was information we did not know. Why did she marry George Prince? We do not know that either. Did George leave her in England to make a life for the family in America? What we have been able to find out, suggests, perhaps not!

Sarah and her children came to North America on the ship *Quebec* sailing from London to New York City on September 15, 1840. Manifest lists show the family composition as: Sarah Prince, thirty-four, Rebecca Hyams, fifteen, Leah Hyams, fourteen and Samuel Prince, five. The 1850 Federal Census for the Parish of St. Phillips and St. Michaels in Charleston lists Sarah (36), Henry (21), Rebecca (16), and Samuel (14)—these children all born in England. Were they not the same people?



Samuel George Prince

The Hymes-Prince Children

Many questions arose as to who really parented the Hymes children—Henry, Hyam, Rebecca and Leah. Why were Henry and Hyam not on the manifest? Did they travel to America separately from the family? Rebecca Hymes married Samuel Marco on 10 April 1866 having moved to Darlington from Charleston in 1863. Rebecca Marco's New York City death certificate dated 12 November 1916 shows her parents as Cornelius Hyman [sic] and Rebecca Hymes [sic] and that she was born 12 April 1834 in Manchester, England. That would make her two years older than Samuel George Prince born 5 July 1836. Thus, contrary to the *Quebec* ship record she was six years old when she came to America.

It is more difficult to discern Leah Hymes correct age. On the ship *Quebec* from England in 1840 she is listed as 14. On the 1850 census she is listed as 17 and living alone in Charleston. On the 1860 Federal census she is 24 and married to Alex Fineberg (23). On the 1870 Federal Census she is 26 with Alex Fineberg (32). On the 1880 Louisiana Federal Census she is age 34 with husband Alex Fineberg (38). On the 1880 Federal

Census she states both parents are from England.

Although there are no marriage records, several sources suggest that Sarah was married in England to a Hymes and they had several children. Sarah then married George Prince, gave birth to a son, Samuel George Prince, in Portsmouth July 4, 1836. George subsequently left her. In 1840 she followed George to South Carolina and sued for support. She set up a dry goods store at 108 King Street in Charleston where they also resided.

Robert Prince's research in 1980 showed that George Prince, Sarah's estranged husband arrived in Charleston in 1836. He was born October 1814 in Rogasen (Rohaczyn, Rakosyn or Rogozno) Prussia, north of Poznan. In trying to reconstruct a portrait of the father of Samuel Prince, many records had to be pieced together. Based on his naturalization petition of great-great-great-grandfather, George Prince, he became naturalized 13 June 1850. Consolidated Confederate Records available at NARA (National Archives and Records Administration) document that he served first in the Confederate Army as a Private 20 June 1862-21 Aug. 1862 in Company C, 1st Regiment, South Carolina Militia (Charleston Reserves). Next he served in Company A 1st Regiment, Charleston Guard as Private 20 July- 26 Sept. 1863 and was discharged on a Surgeon's Certificate 13 Aug. 1863. Records also indicate George Prince sold supplies to the Confederacy. Medical supplies and similar items are itemized and the transactions range in the hundreds of dollars. In addition to Charleston at least one transaction was completed in Tallahassee.

George Prince is found on the 1841-1842 Charleston City Directory living with an Ann Eliza, midwife. Only after Sarah Prince died, 18 September 1865, did he marry Mary Ann Cortissoz on 10 December 1865. Post Civil War George was a pharmacist (herbalist) who lived at 380 King Street in Charleston, South Carolina based on 1867-78 Charleston City Directories and Federal Census information. In this time period, George purchased two blocks of plantation land in Colleton County approximately 30 miles northwest of Charleston and perhaps ten miles east of Walterboro, the Colleton County seat. The two blocks of 200 and 900 acres are part of *Plantation Round O* and *Parker's Ferry Plantation* bought 10 February 1865 and 16 February 1869 respectively and were originally part of the Estate of Major Felix Warley. It was this property that is alluded to in the letter from Maud Higginbotham Prince when she mentions "the disinherited Samuel Prince." George Prince died 4 June 1878. He is buried at *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Coming Street Cemetery*. George's will dated 15 March 1877, probated 24 June 1878, lists his siblings as Rosa, Yetta Elias of Samter (Szamotuly), brother Stusch (deceased) and Rachel Leiser (Lesser) of Rochester, New York. Through Rachel's death certificate, 7 December 1888, we learned that their parents were David and Dora of Rogasen, Prussia. Robert Prince makes the case that the *Plantation Round O* is mentioned in George Prince's

will, but not later in the will of his second wife Mary Ann (Cortissoz) Prince dated 07 May 1879 in Charleston. Another mystery, how did the property end up in the hands of the Marcoes?

The death of Sarah Prince and a Court Case

Sarah died intestate, in March 1875 and is buried in cemetery *Brith Sholom Beth Israel Orthodox Congregation*. Almost ten years later, The Darlington Judgment Roll documents the following biographical information:

Henry Hymes and Hyam Hymes suit against Samuel Marco, Rebecca Marco (as executors of de son tort, of Sarah Prince), Jacob Kalmus, Manuel Marco, Augustus Nachman, David Haas, George Prince, Leah Fineberg, Alexander Fineberg, and Samuel Prince for the partition of certain real estate and distribution of Sarah's property. They alleged the above property to be in the possession of Samuel and Rebecca Marco. According to legal documents it further states Sarah sold her dry goods business, the stock, the furniture contained in the house, and outhouses at 381 King Street to Louisa Hyams on 1 August 1857. On 7 July 1859, Louisa Hymes (sic) sold the house, dry goods, fixtures and furniture to Rebecca Hymes. In addition, *The Plantation Round O* appears later in the Hymes family owned by Rebecca Hyams Marco, daughter of Sarah Hyams Prince.

In their affidavit, Henry Hymes and Hyam Hymes, declare they are the sons of Sarah Prince and have never received anything from her estate which was ample. They claim Rebecca and Samuel Marco admitted to them that they appropriated to their own use eight to ten thousand dollars after which time, Samuel Marco accumulated large profits and now boasts of being worth forty to fifty thousand dollars, all of this derived from the estate of Sarah Prince. They further claim that Samuel Marco had no means at his disposal at the time of his marriage in 1866 and since the agitation of this suit has sold his valuable house and business to Jacob Kalmus. They suggest that Marco is disposing of his property to put it beyond the reach of the court. They further suggest that Marco is proposing to sell his business to Augustus Nachman. Also many others are indebted to Marco in considerable amounts. They claim that the mortgage to Kalmus is fraudulent and void. They claim that Marco is a bold and unscrupulous speculator. They also claim that he could in any suit bribe one or two jurors five or ten dollars in cash to make a mistrial in any suit averse to him. This became the basis for a request for an injunction.

The Court Record

In March 1875, the court granted an injunction to Henry Hyams and Hyam Hyams against the property of Samuel Marco and Rebecca Marco and the above named defendants to sell or remove their real estate beyond the control of the court. Various affidavits affirm several facts. George Prince abandoned his wife Sarah in England and came to South Carolina. She sued him

for support and after several years won. He continued to neglect and disregarded her as his wife. According to the laws of South Carolina she could not obtain a divorce from George. Her entire real property was the result of her own labor, skill and industry and because of his neglect of her; George Prince was not eligible to benefit from her estate. Later the plaintiffs amend their complaint to exclude George Prince from any benefits of the suit. Sarah was engaged in merchandising and purchased a house in the town of Darlington, and the title was held in the name of Rebecca Hymes (Marco). Very shortly after Sarah died, Rebecca and Samuel Marco married in 1866.

The plaintiffs, Henry and Hyam, claimed that the Estate consisted of stock of dry goods, furniture, silverware, jewelry, money, bank bills, gold and silver amounting to six to eight thousand dollars. The Marcos purportedly had a gold watch of Sarah's which was promised to Henry's infant son. All of this was denied by the Marcos.

In each of Rebecca and Samuel Marco's affidavits there were many counter assertions and details of the history of loans to various family members. To her great grandchildren, the records are of great interest as they give many personal details of the life of Sarah Hymes Prince. *That in the year 1857 in the emergence of the improvidence of her own son, Samuel Prince, [my great-great-grandfather], whom she was attempting to assist in business she became embarrassed, sold her stock of goods to her daughter, Leah Fineberg (also called Louise Fineberg), and applied the proceeds of the said sale mainly to the payment of indebtedness. That after this sale said Sarah Prince never resumed business, being broken in spirit and bankrupt in fortune.* After Sarah's death Rebecca married Samuel Marco. It has taken the work of several researchers working together to solve some of the mystery of our Hymes/Prince family. Whether we ever find out more, depends on what other records we can unearth! □

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New Immigrants in the New South

The Assimilation Process and the Jews of the South

A Bibliographical Essay

by Patrick Reed

Southern Culture

Jews of German background had been at home in the South long before the arrival of eastern European Jews. Even among those who most tenaciously kept the faith, integration into the larger, overwhelmingly Christian community had been much desired, and to a remarkable degree accomplished. This assimilation was attested to by the near absence of identifiably Jewish sources in the South before 1900. Congregational records did not circulate beyond the bounds of local Jewish communities, and individual writings were invariably aimed at a larger audience. Berlin-born poet Ludwig Lewisohn, who immigrated with his family in 1892 to Charleston, associated neither with *North German peasants turned grocers ... nor with rather ignorant, semi-orthodox Jews from Posen*. He made a *passionate effort to leap the hurdle of his race and be accepted as a Gentile Southerner*.¹

And yet, beginning in 1905, Jewish congregations all across the South called attention to themselves by telling their histories. What prompted a community which had sought for a century to submerge itself suddenly to publish a previously private past? Perhaps Jews' new public self-consciousness arose, in part, from a desire to disassociate themselves from the newly-arrived East Europeans, especially after southern demagogues discovered the effectiveness of anti-Semitic

appeals in 1913. In March 1916, when the collaborators first approached friends with regard to the propriety of publishing *The History of the Jews of Richmond, 1769-1917*, the fate of Leo Frank was fresh in the minds of every southern Jew. The uncertainty felt by even the most established was evident in the authors' opening words, and in their earnest efforts to remind gentile Richmond of their deep roots there. The family of Herbert T. Ezekiel, coauthor and publisher of the massive work, had been in the city since 1818, along with even earlier arrivals, so that Ezekiel could claim *that the history of the Jews of Richmond is the history of Richmond*. There was no greater effort to demonstrate the truth of this statement than in the nine chapters devoted to Richmond Jews' devotion to the Confederate cause. But local Jews were proud of their success and contributions to the community, Ezekiel was careful to share credit with *their Christian neighbors, for there are few enterprises in this city that flourish from the support of a single class*.²

Predictably filiopietistic, these first books—full of names, dates, and organizations—were of interest primarily to antiquarians and another generation of amateurs. For example, the object of Mrs. David J. Greenberg in *Through the Years: A Study of the Richmond Jewish Community*, privately published in 1954, was merely to bring the Ezekiel-Lichtenstein study up to date.³ Even a recent publication by the University of