

The Glazier of Rockaway

Max (Hertz) Soffer · Menachem

Ben's stepfather's grandfather · Soffer line · 1889 – 1968

MS

A glazier from the Galician town of Bircza, Max Soffer spent some sixty years in Rockaway, founded a synagogue there, and died after a robbery in his own shop at nearly eighty.

Max Soffer was born on 25 January 1889 at Bircza, a small Galician town near Przemyśl, now in south-eastern Poland. His Hebrew name was Menachem. His parents appear on his 1917 marriage certificate as Samuel Soffer and Rebecca née Rubinfeld; the ship's manifest calls his father 'Scholem Sojfer' of Bircza, the **Shulem** of the family tree, and Rubinfelds of Bircza turn up in Galician registers of that era. His mother, **Rebecca**, and his father had both died by 1943.

For years his papers hid where he came from. He later said he arrived on the Cleveland in August 1910, but his Queens naturalization file of 1927 matches him to an Ellis Island record of 29 August 1909: 'Monacheim Sojfer', single, a glazier, born and last living at Bircza, sailed from Hamburg on the Cleveland. His passage had been paid by his brother **Moses Soifer** of 63 Cherry Street, whom he was going to join. In 1914, a glazier of 131 Pitt Street on the Lower East Side, he filed his first declaration of intention; by 1917 he was a glazier at Far Rockaway, and registered for the draft that June as Max Hertz Soffer. On 30 September 1917 he married **Anna James** at her family's home in the Bronx.

Rockaway became home for good. The 1920 census finds Max and Anna owning, with a mortgage, 596 Boulevard, Rockaway Beach, where he ran his own house-furnishings business, and that October his brother **Isaac's** wife **Zlata** and her son **Fischel** arrived from Europe bound for that very address, so Isaac's family first landed at Max's house. About 1923 The Wave reported that 'M. H. Soffer, glazier' was improving the corner property at Beach 60th Street and the Boulevard he had recently bought. Their daughter **Sylvia** was

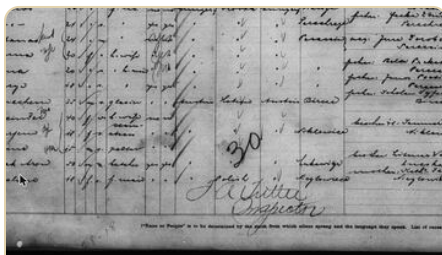
BORN	25 January 1889, Bircza, Galicia
DIED	30 June 1968, St. Joseph's Hospital, after a robbery in his shop
HEBREW NAME	Menachem
ALSO RECORDED AS	Monacheim Sojfer (1909); Max Hertz Soffer (1917); Max Henry Soffer (1922, 1942)
ARRIVED	New York on the Cleveland from Hamburg, 29 August 1909
MARRIED	Anna James, 30 September 1917, the Bronx
OCCUPATION	Glazier; owner of M. H. Soffer & Son, Arverne
BURIED	Wellwood Cemetery, West Babylon

born on 3 March 1923, and the 1925 state census finds the three of them at 77-12 Boulevard, the same address **Rose Hanig** gave when she married his brother **Benny** in November 1924. The couple also had a son, **Morris**. Max refiled for citizenship in 1922 as Max Henry Soffer, and was naturalized in Queens on 30 November 1927, with Moses, by then a real-estate owner in Rockaway Beach, as his witness. In 1940 he kept his own retail glass shop, with teenage Sylvia as its bookkeeper, and the 1942 'old man's draft' found him self-employed at 6418 Boulevard, Arverne.

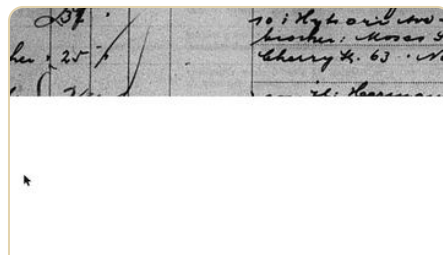
The family always said Max was robbed and beaten and that it killed him, and it was true. On 13 June 1968 three youths mugged and robbed him in his own shop, M. H. Soffer & Son, glazier and paints, at 64-18 Rockaway Beach Boulevard. He died of it on 30 June at St. Joseph's Hospital; The Wave put him at about 78, the cemetery at 80, though his birth date makes him 79. Its obituary, headlined 'Mugging Leads To Death', called him a glazier in Rockaway for 61 years who, with his late brother Morris, was among the first Orthodox Jews in the community, and the founder of Congregation Chevra Shomrei Shabbos, which he later passed on to others; he was not one for organisations, but gave to many charities. He was buried at Wellwood Cemetery, West Babylon, in the plot of Congregation Arugath Habosem. Anna died two months later, and her own obituary said the shock of his death was believed to have contributed to hers.

His story comes from the 1909 Cleveland manifest, his 1914 and 1922 declarations and 1927 naturalization file, the 1917 marriage certificate and draft card, the 1920 and 1925 censuses, the 1942 draft card, the pages of The Wave and the Wellwood records.

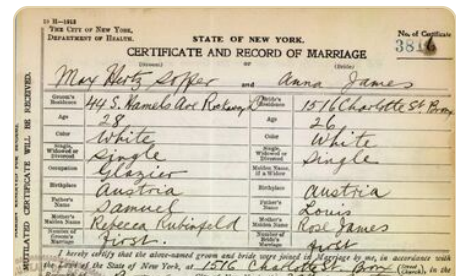
FROM THE ARCHIVE



Ellis Island manifest 1909, line 25:
Menachem Sojfer, glazier, of Bircza



Manifest facing page: joining brother
Moses Soifer, 63 Cherry St



Marriage certificate (Bronx #3816), 1917
— names his parents Samuel & Rebecca

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
 CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1920—POPULATION

NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Rockaway Beach
(Insert proper number and name of town, city, village)

ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 29 DAY OF

DECLARATION.		NATIVITY AND MOTHER TONGUE.	
1	2	3	4
Max H. Soffer	New York	Russ Poland	Jewish
Anna Soffer	Galician	Galician	Jewish
Anna Soffer	Austria	Austria	Jewish

1920 U.S. census, Queens AD 5, ED 382, sheet 21B (enumerated 29 Jan 1920), Rockaway Beach, lines 52-53: 596 Boulevard, dwelling 73, family 81: Max H. Soffer, head, owner (mortgaged), 30, born Galicia, arrived 1910, first papers, proprietor of a house-furnishings business on his own account; Anna, wife, 28, born Austria (T625 roll 1236)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 DECLARATION OF INTENTION

I, Max Henry Soffer, do hereby declare on oath that I am a person of good moral character, and that I am not an alien enemy, or a person who has been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude, and that I am not a person who has been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude, and that I am not a person who has been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude.

I was born in Galicia on the 30 day of September, anno Domini 1890. I now reside on the 30 day of September, anno Domini 1927.

Naturalisation file, Queens Petition #16482 (1927), with 1922 declaration and 1926 certificate of arrival

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1897 and on or before February 16, 1907)

1. NAME (Print) MAX HENRY SOFFER ORDER NUMBER 2726

2. PLACE OF BIRTH (Print) ROCKAWAY BEACH, QUEENS, N.Y.

3. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 6418 BOULEVARD, ARVERNE, QUEENS, N.Y.

4. MARRIAGE (Print) SAME

5. PLACE OF BIRTH (Print) ROCKAWAY BEACH, QUEENS, N.Y.

6. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 6418 BOULEVARD, ARVERNE, QUEENS, N.Y.

WWII draft card, 1942 (Queens U2726): Max Henry Soffer, 6418 Boulevard, Arverne; contact Anna Soffer

OBITUARY

Max Soffer
Mugging Leads To Death

Shocked relatives of Max Soffer, a glazier here for 61 years

'Max Soffer: Mugging Leads To Death': mugged and robbed in his shop by three youths on 13 June 1968; died 30 June at St. Joseph's Hospital (The Wave, Rockaway Beach, Thu 18 Jul 1968, Sec. I p.6)

Mrs. Anna Soffer
Widow Of Max Soffer

Mrs. Anna Soffer, widow of Max Soffer, died August 29 at the Ocean View Nursing Home. Mr. Soffer died June 30 as a result of a mugging and robbing

Anna's obituary: 'Mr. Soffer died June 30 as a result of a mugging and robbing in June' (The Wave, 5 Sep 1968)