

## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE SOUGET FAMILY

written in 1987 by Margaret Souget

### **First Generation**

The records go back to Zadok ben Mordechai ha Shochet who presumably came from Eastern Europe fleeing from the Chmielnicki pogroms. He was probably born in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> C, and invited by the Ashkenazy community in Amsterdam to become their Shochet, (ritual butcher). Thanks to his profession, several documents, all written in Hebrew, are preserved,

### **Second Generation.**

Among these is one document about the continuation of the shop by his son Bendit. Another son, Salomon, apparently also a salesman, did not inherit, the business being probably not large enough to sustain two families. Salomon did faithfully add at the registration of the birth of his son Moshe 'from Zadok Shochet'.

### **Third Generation.**

Grandson Moshe himself would likewise add to the registration of his son Mattetai 'from Zadok Shochet'.

### **Fourth Generation.**

Mattetai, born in 1767, married a girl in 1789 named Rebecca Arons. His marriage, as well as those of his father and grandfather, was registered before the Dutch officials in a kind of transcript of the original Hebrew. Thus Mattetai ben Moshe was called Mattijs Moses and Rebecca bat Arons became Rebecca Arons. Their union produced 5 children, 3 daughters born resp. in 1790, '92 and '94, a son Salomon in 1798 and a son Aron in 1800. Mattetai died at a rather young age, but his wife was an enterprising woman.

For generations the family had lived in the Jewish part of Amsterdam near the waterfront, among little shops and storehouses. There, on Breestraat, opposite the house where Rembrandt used to live and work, stood a house with a white marble front which had once belonged to a wealthy Portuguese merchant named do Pinto. At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> C a pharmacy called 'The Marblestone Pharmacy' (De Hardsteen Apotheek) was situated there. The widow of Mattijs Moshe bought this house and started a shop in household articles, toys etc. which flourished.

In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> C. Holland had been conquered by Napoleon and on his orders everyone had to be registered and a surname adopted. The widow had herself and her five children registered and Zadok Shochet was not forgotten. This might lead to the conclusion that he indeed was the founder of this family in Amsterdam. The widow of Mattetai ben Moshe, commonly known as Mattijs Moses, chose the family name of 'Shochet'. However the registrar had other things on his mind and when he found that the latin script of this widow was insufficient, he filled in the form misspelling the name of Shochet or Shouchet (Yiddish) as Souget and the name was

pronounced with the French and Dutch 'g' and that was it and has remained thus ever since.

#### **Fifth Generation.**

The eldest son, Salomon, remained unmarried, but he did take over the shop and prospered. Son Aharon married Hannah Cohen in 1832. They had 4 sons and 2 daughters. The sons all worked in the shop and it soon became clear that there were too many people trying to make a living from this enterprise. It could not go on and didn't.

#### **Sixth Generation.**

The sons of Aharon Souget all lived in the same neighbourhood. Three sons named Judah, Mattijs and Moses were born in the early 1830's; one called Abraham was born ten years later and remained unmarried. He lived with one of his elder brothers and worked in the shop, his position was never questioned. The three elder brothers married and raised families in the late 1850's- Judah had 3 children, Mattijs had 5 and Moses had 7 with his first wife, Rosetta, but when she died of tuberculosis, he remarried and had another (two). Thus a fight for economical survival started in which the obvious desperate Moses pushed Mattijs out of the business which Moses continued with Judah and the insignificant and dependent Abraham. The result of this family division was a total split between the two brothers and their descendants.

#### **Seventh Generation.**

Nevertheless, only one son of Judah named Aron Levie, but called Louis, joined the business in the beginning of this century. Moses had only 2 sons by his first wife, David and Aron. One of the sisters of the Souget brothers was married to a man who also worked in the shop and who didn't want another son of the Moses clan there, possibly because he feared for his own position. This second son, Aron, thus was destined to become a doctor and sent to the secondary school, not to the Gymnasium (Lycee), consequently when he went to university; he was inferior to his fellow students who had a knowledge of Greek and Latin. In spite of this, he came first and actually remained the only academically formed member of the family for a long time. He established his practice also in the old neighbourhood (off Geldersekaade) which was on the edge of the ghetto. He drew his patients from the Jewish as well as from the non Jewish community. He had his house specially altered for a doctors practice, with a separate entrance in an alley, never dreaming that 50 years later, in 1942, that second entrance would save his family when the Germans forced their way in through the front door.

The daughters of Moses all married businessmen, some did well others not so well. Mattijs had four sons who all had to look for other occupations because of the division in the family, But they all fared rather well and one, Salomon-Mattijs, married one of the daughters of Moses, Rachel, a romance in true 'fin de siecle' style which brought about some reconciliation between the two brothers, Mattijs and Moses The marriage, by the way, Was a very happy one" (See Memoirs Lien Souget, early married life in Amsterdam).

It is interesting to note that in this generation marriages took place only within the community, that is the Ashkenazy Jewish community of Amsterdam; that all were engaged in business and that they lived literally round the corner of one another.

#### **Eighth Generation.**

The next generation born around the turn of the century, stepped out: some took big steps, some small ones. Some moved to more fashionable neighbourhoods or suburbia, some emigrated to America. One committed suicide, one married a non Jew. Some became accountants, but most stayed in a business of sorts and married Jews, although not necessarily from the same social strata. And several marriages remained childless, about one-fifth. Those who emigrated and often 'were never heard of again' amount also to one-fifth. Of those who remained, more than half were killed in the holocaust with their children. Some in hiding managed to survive.

#### **Ninth Generation.**

These children would have secondary education. Some were in school when war broke out, others were quite small still. Of this surviving generation about half live outside Holland. It is startling that of those few who were born after the war of surviving parents several have had a very hard time, as if fate hit a complete generation. The children of this generation are very few indeed.

#### **Tenth Generation.**

Most are also still very young. On them is the future. The name Souget has, save for one child, (Margaret's son Saul) disappeared.

(Written in about 1987. Since she wrote this Margaret has emigrated with her three children to Israel.)

Additions between () added by Esther David, March 1992

## REBECCA ARONS

Written probably by Margaret Souget

The life of Rebecca Arons is a remarkable one and of great importance for the family Souget. As I am getting more and more involved in my research into the genealogy of this family, I come across her name most frequently. The latest information shows that she was born in London. As it is well-known that there was frequent traffic between London and Amsterdam in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by ~~diamond~~ traders, it seems a distinct possibility that a branch of this Souget family had connections there, although this is not mentioned anywhere. What is apparent, though, is the fact that the Aarons family was wealthy, as is proved by her trousseau of 1000 guilders, besides 1000 guilders cash when she got married. (see entries Winkler Prins: Diamant molen) (Diamonds came from British India since antiquity, from Borneo during the Middle Ages and from Brazil since 1720) (Muiderberg Jewish Cemetery since 1642)

She was born in London about 1769. Her grandfather was:

Isaac Polak (Pollock)	abt 1700 – after 1774. Her father was
Aron Isaac	abt 1735 – 1774, who married
Vogeltje Goedman	abt 1735 – 1786. They had two (?) children

Isaac Aron	1762 – 1810
Judik Arons	abt 1765 – 1831) In Philadelphia as Catherine Married Simpson Morris
Rebecca Arons	1769 - 1845

*(Note by Allan Blacher – this info differs totally from much more detailed family tree info on the Akevoth Dutch Genealogy website)*

If Judith Aarons was indeed her sister, then she must have come from London to Amsterdam in about 1772. Judith moved back to London in 1786 where she lived in the house of her uncle, Solomon Pollock in 1789. Rebecca stayed in Amsterdam and lived on Moddermolensteeg in 1789

She gave notice of intended marriage on 23 January 1789 accompanied by her guardians Joel (Barend) Beer and Aaron Isaac Cohen. She married in 1789 Matthias Mozes Souget.

On the evening of 17 January right after the ending of Sabbath the marriage contract was concluded. She received f1000 cash and f1000 for her trousseau as well as f200 from her brother Isaac. She must have been a welcome addition to the Souget family who had had to split the (Shochet) business.

Mattijs Mozes, (her husband) was his father's business partner and brought half of the trade with him in marriage. They went to live in his father's house and paid f10 weekly for board and lodging for themselves and their children. They had 5 children:

Vogel in 1790, two years later Machdel, two years later Rachel, in '98 Salomon and in 1800 Aaron.

Two years later Matthijs Mozes died and was buried in the family plot at Muiderburg.

Now Rebecca moves and starts a shop of 'galanteneen' (haberdashery) on Jodenbreestraat. The house was then called 'De Handstenen Apotheek' but is today the 'Pinto Huis, on ~~Jodenbreestraat~~ St. Antoniesbreestraat 48. In 1811 the widow gives her name to the Napoleonic authorities as Rebekka Aronds. Souget (which is a misspelling of the name Shochet or Souchet). She lived then St. Antoniesbreestraat 48. She died there on 14 May 1845 at the age of 76 years.

## THE STORY OF 'S GRAVELANDSEWEG 19 IN BUSSUM

Written in August 1999 by Esther Souget

The villa at 's Gravelandseweg 19 was large, built of red brick, and set in a generous garden. So large, in fact, that there was room for a coach house, a greenhouse full of tropical plants and an aviary. It was situated in the part of Bussum called 'het Spieghel', a villa park area where many large villas still stand in their mature gardens; they now often are occupied by several families or businesses. This villa was one of two adjacent and similar houses built around 1905 for an extended family who had recently returned from the East Indies.

When I was young I regularly visited my best friend, Marcelle Vorstman, who lived there. The villa had three floors, plus, probably, a basement, but there I have never been. Neither did I ever go up to the attic where Mr V. had built his electric train set. Only my brother Jaap had been allowed up there and Mr V. had shown him how to build a model motorbike. There were large reception rooms, a dining room, a breakfast room and marble corridors, with tall windows looking out into gardens with a catalpa (Indian bean tree), an araucaria (monkey puzzle tree) and a Japanese maple. Along the front ran an open gallery with pillars at the corners, a wisteria winding its way around them. There was an aviary, still used as such by Marcelle's mother, but the coach house had become a garage and a motorcar had replaced the horses.

The villa next door was later made into a girl's school where Marcelle's sister attended. Marcelle remembers her sister saying: "Today I had lessons in your bedroom Mum!"

The 'Nieuwe 's Gravelandseweg' starts at the Bussum railway station and then curves around several villa parks towards common grazing lands and on to the town of 's Graveland. Large beeches grow alongside the road and in the gardens very large trees and flowering shrubs make this part of town what one always imagines a villa-park to be. Lanes curve and intersect to make it a maze for the unwary.

I had always known that an uncle of my Father's had lived in this house. Marcelle's mother once showed me two little pictures on the wall of a corridor saying: "These pictures were left here and belonged to your father's uncle." I also knew that this uncle must have been a charming, even a flamboyant gentleman who had been immensely wealthy, but whose widow became so poor that she had to be supported by members of the family, among them my father.

Recently I received a folder with papers giving details of my great-uncle's affairs, and of those of his son and here follow some of these details and the story of their lives.

Great-uncle Marcus Heiman Souget was born in 1869 in Amsterdam, the fifth child of Mattijs Souget and Duife Monnickendarn. In 1903 he married a lovely girl, called 'Pretty' Netje Citroen. (Her father, Isaac Barend Citroen, had lived in Paramaribo, Surinam, Dutch West-Indies, where he had married Judith Samuels, and worked as a watchmaker.) Netje was born in 1872 in Paramaribo. In 1903 Marcus and Netje must have lived in Paris, because poor Netje died there in 1904, having given birth to a son Matthijs Leonardus Michel.

In 1907 the widower came to Amsterdam with his young son. Marcus' brother-in-law, Jacob Citroen, a diamond worker of modest means, and his wife took in the little boy. Language in the Citroen household became a major obstacle, because little Matthijs only spoke French and mother Flora Citroen-Amstell, who was born and bred in

England, only English. Matthijs was a difficult boy and the situation went from bad to worse.

In 1908 Marcus married, as was common in Jewish families, Netje's younger sister, 'Pretty' Betje (Bilha Isaac Citroen), born in Paramaribo on 30 March 1874. The family went to live in Amsterdam in a rented apartment by the river Amstel. Marcus worked as a margarine salesman. The following year Marcus had such financial problems that he asked his brother-in-law Jacob for a loan. Even then it was apparent that Marcus was rather imprudent and somewhat irresponsible with financial matters.

In 1910 things were looking up for Marcus; he moved to Bussum where the family lived in a nice house at Gudelalaan 5. There, Betje had two children Juliette and Leopold. By 1914 things were going so well for the family that they moved to a large villa on Nieuwe's Gravelandseweg 19, the very house where I spent many happy hours playing with my friend Marcelle!

The story is taken up by Joop Citroen, the son of Jacob Citroen who is at this moment of writing, April 1996, 90 years old, a widower, and still going strong and living in a comfortable apartment in Bilthoven, Holland.

Around 1914 Uncle Marcus gave a huge party for the family at his beautiful villa in Bussum. Meyer Souget (my father), son of Marcus' elder brother Mozes, must also have been present because he often talked about this event. We believe it was for Marcus' wife Betje's fortieth birthday and probably also a housewarming party. Joop, then eight years old, still talks about the splendour of the horses with plumes on their heads, pulling the carriages for the guests arriving at Bussum station from Amsterdam. Meyer mentioned the amazing fact that Uncle Marcus had rented a special train for the occasion! The whole neighbourhood had run out, gaping at the sight, and Joop says he can still hear the clip-clopping of the horses' hooves on the paving stones.

The house was splendid, with rooms full of antique French furniture, the aviary, the palm house, stables and other wonders. Uncle Marcus had engaged waiters and a Belgian singer, Marie Waalwijk, who sang operatic arias. (He was paying for her musical studies.) As soon as her last note had faded, waiters would come in with trays laden with champagne. This must have been an unforgettable event for the family.

Marcus loved fencing and had his own coach who came to the house. In short, by now he led the life of an opulent gentleman the rich man in the family. We see from a bill of January 1917 from a 'tapissier', Ernest Rousseau in Paris: "for 'tissus soiesie (sic)' 1374 French francs". Also "110 Dutch florins for a Louis KV 'fauteuil' " (easy chair).

As far as his business was concerned, Marcus went into partnership with a friend, an artist, called L. Nardus, who lived in Algiers. From this artist, two paintings are still in our family: one called 'Le vieillard Arabe' was painted in 1914 in Tunis and now hangs in my house. The other, of an Arab girl, hangs in the apartment of my cousin Leonard Vis in Toronto.

In December 1917, Marcus Souget and Nardus started an auction house; we still have the documents. Nardus bought a farm in Blaricum, so Joop tells us, where he had installed a luxurious bathroom of "white marble with many shiny taps and other luxuries".

The relationship with Nardus was questionable. Large sums of money were made, and later lost, in what was rumoured in the family to be a shady trade. Was it faked paintings or white slaves, or perhaps black marketeering during the Great War? We

shall never know. In October 1918 there was correspondence from solicitor Polenaar regarding the wording of Marcus' will where he recommended that Nardus be omitted from the will 'in case of future problems'.

Life must have been happy; there is mention of a holiday at Scheveningen in the Kurhaus, but the weather was bad; of renting coach-and-horses for six months; of the sale of the 'bronze horse'; of having been accepted by the Amsterdam Agent's Society (Makelaars Vereeniging). Of an office (?) at Geldersekaade 60. A bill all in French dated October 1918 from the Amstel Hotel, Amsterdam, for the rental of an apartment (bain) for fl4, with dinner f8.50: one veal steak; 1 'déjeuner': 1 egg, 1 herring f2.60; 1 Moët Wh. St., 2 Victoria (mineral water) f19; 1/2 Heidsieck Mon-Sec f7.50. 'Pharmacie' f-.50; Cash fl.-; Total f53.15. Another bill from the Amstel Hotel, dated Nov. 6 reads: 'expédié a Mr Müller, RoelofHartstraat 9: 6/1 Médoc f2l.-; 6 bouteilles f-.60. Dated Nov 11: 1 consommé double f5.-.

A letter from his accountant, M Agema" dated 24 Oct 1918, asks Marcus for help with a move he had to make; could Marcus perhaps buy a house for him and could Agema pay him rent?

A letter from a poor musician in the Hague: could he lend him money against security of some small statues? Could he become his patron in these difficult times?

Then disaster struck: Marcus got the Spanish 'flu and died on 11 November 1918 after three days' illness.

This meant disaster for the widow who may have been ill herself disaster for the various petitioners and for the children. Soon it became clear that Marcus had many debts, with the result that the magnificent contents of the house in Bussum had to be auctioned off. I don't believe that Marcus owned the house itself. The money that was realized was invested by young Matthijs in Royal Dutch Lloyd, which soon afterwards went bankrupt. Betje was left with little and thereafter lived modestly in an apartment in Amsterdam where she had to be supported by various members of the family, among whom my father and Leonard Vis' father. Was that how they were left the paintings? Betje's own three children showed no interest in her financial problems.

Poor old Betje, daughter Juliette and her dentist husband, son Leo, old Jacob Citroen were among the many who lost their lives in the concentration camps. Joop Citroen and his wife survived the war and wrote a well-known book about their war experiences, called *Duet Pathétique*.

Matthijs survived the war and thereafter called himself Michel. He had been married to Helena Leefson who did not survive the war. He went to live in Paris where shortly after the war he married mademoiselle Simone Brosse, a beautiful blonde. It is possible that he had been hiding in the Brosse family home during the German occupation. They had no children, but were happy together, living at Louveciennes where my parents, Meyer and Lien Souget, visited them occasionally. I also stayed with them in their beautifully furnished Paris apartment on two occasions in 1949 & '50. They were very kind to me. They often travelled to Holland where Michel once rented an old windmill for a peppercorn rent of one guilder. He restored the mill beautifully and Meyer Souget ever afterwards called him: Michel of the Windmill. Meyer looked after his affairs in Holland and after Michel had died in Paris aged 61, I asked my father: "Well, did he leave you anything for all you have done for him?" "Yes", Father replied, "His debts."

By war's end my parents had lost many of their belongings. Our house at Koedijklaan in Bussum was then furnished with bits and pieces returned to us, things left in the house by its former Quisling owners, and some other good pieces of furniture. We also had some china which had belonged to Aunt Betje and a large eiderdown with a beautiful heavy linen damask cover in shades of green and pink. When I got married, we slept under Aunt Betje's eiderdown for many years until the dust became too much for us and we had to throw it out.

But what about the three antique little chairs and lady's desk which I have here at home, and the antique Dutch inlaid desk, table and chairs which my nephew Benjamin Joles has in his house now? Was all that once part of Marcus' treasures? The only ones who could tell us are dead and gone now.

The house at 's Gravelandsweg 19 burnt down after it was used for some years by publisher van Dishoek . Now a modern block of flats occupies the large gardens.

Whitstable, August 1999

(footnote - by Allan Blacher - some of the dates quoted in this document do not correspond with formal records and gravestone inscriptions and should not therefore be assumed to be correct).