

How and when did David Maidenberg get to Marion, Indiana?

We don't have the details, but the broad outline is this:

June 30, 1906: David and Rose arrive at Ellis Island. He is 22, she is 21. They go to Philadelphia, where David's aunt, Ida Cohen, lives. Ida, called "Tante Haika" by our family, is the sister of David's mother Perel.

We do not know what David does in his first months in America, likely he becomes a peddler, like so many other immigrants.

February 7, 1907: Meyer, David and Rose's first child, is born in Hagerstown, Maryland. [See map of David's journey to Marion.] We do not know why David was in Hagerstown, which though 180 miles west of Philadelphia was still part of the city's trade region. Was he directed there by Tante Haika? Or by his suppliers? There was an organized group of Jews who outfitted peddlers, extending them credit so they could purchase their trade goods.

How soon after arriving in Philadelphia did David and his pregnant wife move to Hagerstown? Meyer's birth date shows that Rose was in the early stages of pregnancy with when she crossed the Atlantic.

April 27, 1910: David, Rose and Meyer are recorded in the U.S. Census as living at 505 Spruce St., Philadelphia. When they moved back to Philadelphia from Hagerstown is not known.

June 21, 1912: Milt, the third son, is born in Philadelphia. The residence on the birth certificate is 324 Carpenter St. Ben, the second son, was also born in Philadelphia, on April 28, 1910.

November 4, 1913: David files his Declaration of Intention for becoming a U.S. Citizen at the Grant County Courthouse in Marion.

November 2, 1914: Frank, the fourth son, is born in Marion, Indiana.

This information suggests that David settled in Marion sometime in 1913, possibly a year after the birth of Milt in Philadelphia.

Both Ben and Frank recall David getting advice from someone in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to go west where there was rising economic activity. In Frank's telling, the advisor is a rabbi.

Also, Frank recalls the family as living in Harrisburg for some time, but this has not been verified.

In any event, David struck out along the Pennsylvania Railroad for the west.

And here is where the stories from three sons all have the same amusing point, but different facts.

The point is that David thought he was going to one place, but wound up somewhere else.

In Meyer's version, David thought he was going to Columbus, Ohio, but wound up in Columbus, Indiana, where he met someone from Marion, who encouraged him to come north and peddle there.

In both Ben's and Frank's version, David was going to Marion, Ohio, but wound up in Marion, Indiana.

In these versions, David tells the conductor to wake him up in Marion, meaning Ohio, but the conductor doesn't understand and wakes him up farther to the west, in Marion, Indiana.

There is still another version related by Ben, which is less dramatic than the ones about getting off at the wrong train station. This version says simply that David was in Marion, Indiana for six months before he realized he was not in the Marion

he intended. But he found the peddling business good, so he stayed, bringing out the family from Philadelphia.

The train story made good copy, which may be the reason Ben wrote about it in his column and Frank remembered it that way. Meyer also used the train story, but he was adamant that it was Columbus and not Marion that was the destination.

Rather solving the mystery, checking on train schedules only deepens it.

Research conducted in 2013 at the Marion Public Library at Mike's request stated that there was no direct line between Marion, Ohio and Marion, Indiana. Nor was there a direct line between Columbus, Ohio and Columbus, Indiana. Both Columbus, Ohio and Marion, Indiana were on the direct line of the Pennsylvania Railroad from Philadelphia to Chicago. From Columbus, Ohio to Marion, Ohio there was a Big Four train or an "interurban" line, but either would have required a change from the Pennsylvania.

Therefore, the story of sleeping through the first stop and getting off at the second has to be regarded as suspect, misremembered or misinterpreted..

My surmise is that David bought a ticket to "Marion" on the Pennsylvania Railroad, not comprehending he was headed to Indiana. He got off there, (likely with the help of the conductor), and went to work.

He was 30 years old when he started peddling in Marion. He was courageous and resourceful. Marion and nearby Gas City--so named because of a discovery of natural gas--were thriving. As a peddler, David was the Amazon.com of his era, bringing notions and piece goods to farmsteads in the area surrounding Marion. He first had a horse and buggy, then a Ford truck. Eventually he opened a store in downtown Gas City called Indiana Dry Goods. His family lived in Marion.

