

The Bookbinder Family of Philadelphia Restaurant Fame

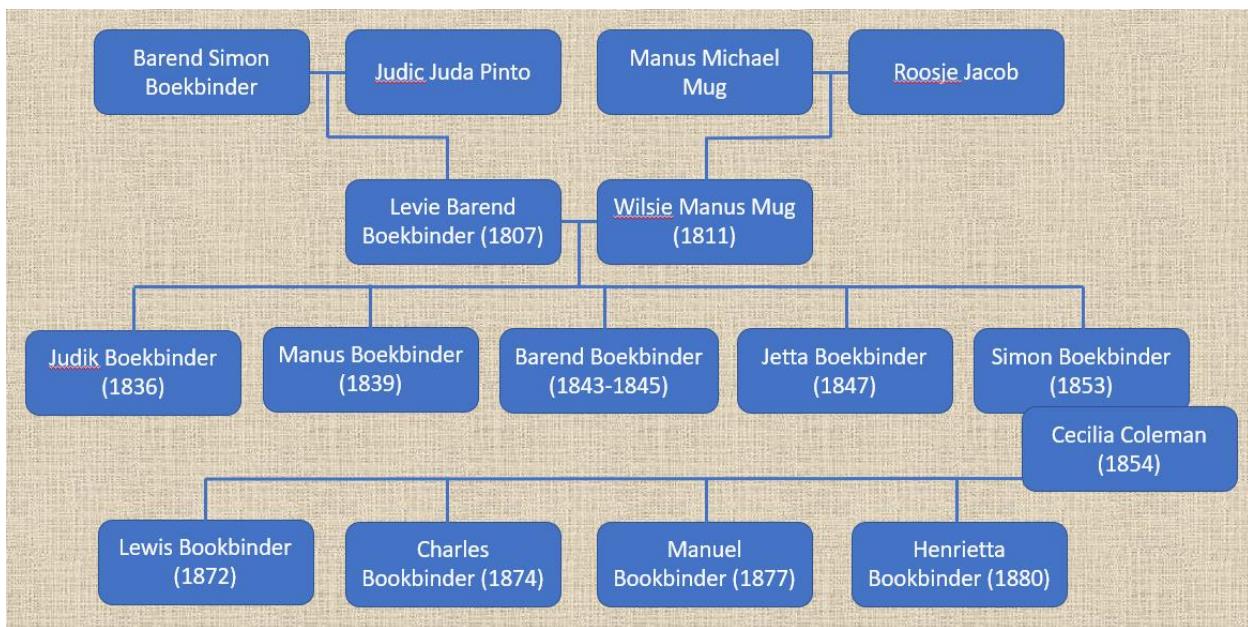
Hal Bookbinder

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The Bookbinder came from Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Levie Barend Boekbinder, later Levy Bookbinder, arrived in the U.S. in June 1857. His second oldest son, Manus Boekbinder was already here and had become Emanuel Bookbinder. His wife and two youngest children arrived in October after 39 days at sea on a small clipper ship through “heavy weather”.

His youngest child, Simon Boekbinder, would become Samuel Bookbinder and found Bookbinders Restaurant, not in 1865 as legend would have it, but in 1898. He was likely far too busy in 1865 preparing for his Bar Mitzvah. He then pursued a number of other businesses before opening his (and Cecilia’s) oyster bar on South 5th Street in 1893. In 1898 he would move to 125 Walnut Street by the wharf and open Bookbinders Restaurant.

Below is a four generation snapshot of the Boekbinder family tree showing names at birth. Many given names were changed in America and the surname was of course changed as well.

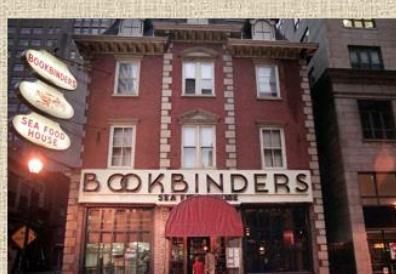
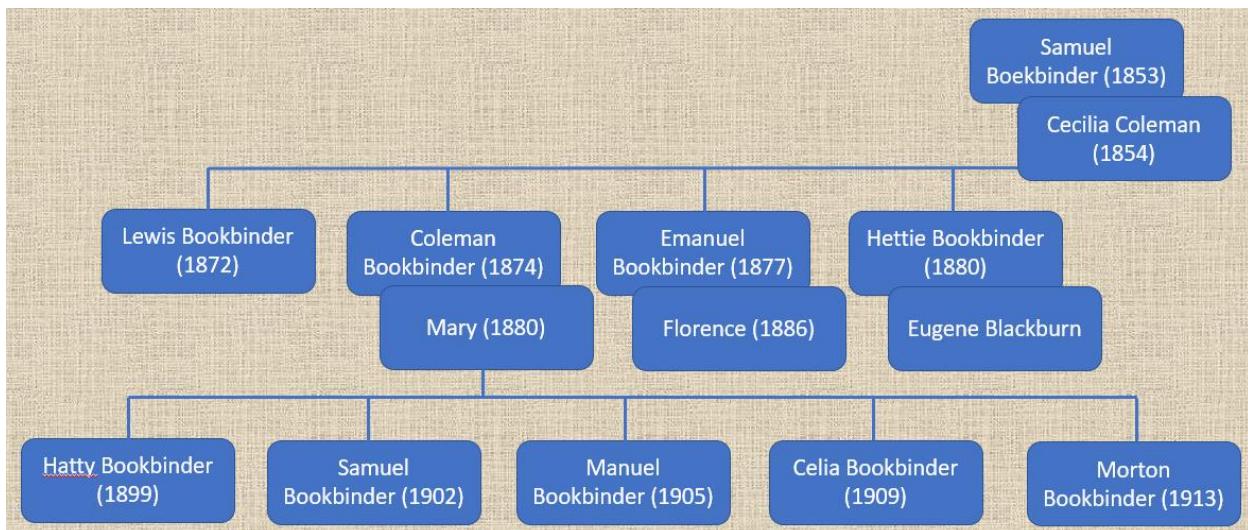


I will share more generations of the Bookbinder family and some interesting stories regarding the history of the two Bookbinder Restaurants, including

- Emanuel Bookbinder's activities during Prohibition (he is Manuel in the above tree)
- Henrietta's assumption of ownership and the eventual sale to John Taxin in 1945
- The founding of the competing Bookbinders Restaurant on 15th Street in 1935
- The promotions by John Taxin which made “Old Original Bookbinders” famous
- And, the decline and eventual demise of both restaurants

I will also deal with some of the myths that continue to this day.

Below is the next generation of the family tree focusing on Coleman's children as some of them had roles in both Bookbinders Restaurants. Coleman was Charles at birth, Emanuel was Manuel at birth, and Hettie was Henrietta at birth. Only Lewis remained Lewis. As I wrote, there were many name changes. These are only a few of them.



Bookbinders on 15th St.



VS.



Bookbinders on Walnut St.



Before John Taxin renamed the Walnut Street restaurant, "Old Original Bookbinders", Hettie Bookbinder Blackburn had already designated it "Old Bookbinders" to differentiate it from the upstart on 15th St., as the above advertisement demonstrates.

Below are some items associated with the “Old Original Bookbinders”, the buildings that made it up, a promotional sign, the fireplace made from paving stones “that Washington trod upon”, a dining room with pictures of famous diners, like Marilyn Monroe, Frank Sinatra and a number of presidents, and finally a brass bell that may look like the one “Sarah Bookbinder” (who never existed) used to let the dockworkers know it was lunchtime in 1865 (nope!).



Old Original Bookbinders displayed the lunch bell that “Sarah Bookbinder rang in 1865 to summon dockworkers to lunch”. It might have looked like this.

In a final reveal, I will share that there is no known relation between the apparently Sephardic Philadelphia Bookbinders, originally from Holland, and the definitely Ashkenazi NY/NJ Bookbinders, originally from Ukraine. But, with the same surname, I had to know more.



Bookbinders in Richmond, VA