

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, October 1, 2007

Jacob Noznesky of Kennett Square (1876–1950): About 1906, a young Russian Jew from the Ukraine emigrated to the United States seeking freedom. He left behind his young wife, promising to send for her when he could afford it. Looking for work in New York and Philadelphia, he heard about a man named Pierre du Pont who had just bought an old arboretum called Pierce's Park near Kennett Square and had plans to build elaborate gardens, fountains, and a conservatory, to be named Longwood. Jake soon hired on as a laborer and worked at Longwood during the early construction period. Looking around him, however, he saw many new opportunities in his adopted land. He sent for his wife and went into business for himself in and around Kennett Square.

Jake soon became known as the "junk man." With a horse and cart, he collected scrap iron and junk from many sources, including the Marshall mills at Yorklyn. Saving his money and needing few niceties, he and his wife raised five sons and two daughters and eventually bought a nice older home on South Union Street in Kennett. Graduating to a Model T truck, he expanded his business and his real estate empire, acquiring many buildings in the center of Kennett Square and building a fine garage for those times, the Royal Garage. Once an official at the Yorklyn mills did not want to let him have any scrap without cash on the line, but my father interceded for him, saying, "You don't need to worry about Jake paying you." Jake never forgot it, and they were fast friends until Jake passed away at the age of 74. I can remember his stopping at Auburn Heights, still in his Model T Ford truck, after my father had retired from the mills. My father remarked that the "T" was tuned up so well and operated so expertly that you could hardly hear it run. This truck still runs and is in the care of our active member, Lou Mandich. I also recall a visit to the Royal Garage about 1935 and seeing a mint-condition 1928 Packard Six seven-passenger sedan, which Jake had bought to transport his large family. He needed a big car but did not spend the extra money to buy a big Straight Eight, which would have cost \$1,000 more.

In his later years, he had turned the junk business over to his son Charlie and the Royal Garage to his son Raymond. If we were ever in Kennett Square on a summer evening, we would find Jake on the sidewalk in front of the garage, talking to his many neighbors who dropped by. Often, I stopped with my father to chat. Once Herb Pennock, the great New York Yankees pitcher of the 1920s (who, at the height of his career, was nicknamed "the Squire of Kennett Square"), stopped to fill up with gas at one of the three gas pumps along the curb. Another time a man in distress pulled in front with his car on fire. Sparks from his cigarette had ignited the upholstery. Even if you saw Jake three times a day, he always wanted to shake hands.

In 1939, just before hostilities broke out in World War II, Jake went back home to visit his aging mother. He was depressed when he returned, telling me that at one time there were 450 churches in Kiev, and now they were all closed. He was so grateful to be in America. In the early days of auto collecting in the late 1940s, we would often make up a Sunday tour, driving from 20 to 50 miles each way and having dinner at the far end. On a hot Sunday, we went to Dover with three Stanleys (including Roy Bengé and his Model 720), Ralph "Rusty" Worth with his Model T Ford, Raymond Noznesky with his '12 Buick, and Reed Kelly with a homemade Model T roadster. Jake was along on the trip and rode much of the way in the middle of the back seat in Worth's Model T as the top was up, providing some protection from the hot sun. I think Emma Bengé was the only woman on the trip. Sixty plus years ago, many service clubs and other organizations were quite restrictive in whom they would invite to join. The Lions Club of Kennett Square, at that time the community's primary service club, invited Jake to be a member, and he became the first Jew ever to receive this honor. As long as he was able, he never missed a weekly meeting. In 1948, Jake's life and accomplishments were featured in the *Readers' Digest's* monthly biography called "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met," written by neighbor William S. Dutton. The tribute was well-deserved. Jake never cheated anyone to achieve his success.