

## The Colchamiro Family Tree & Name

The Colchamiro Family Tree, which was provided by Jacqueline Huhem and the Colchamiro name, or how the name Colchamiro was created, was told to me as follows:

My grandfather, Elias, came to this country from Greece and did not speak English very well, if at all. On the immigration line he was asked what his last name was. In the town he was from, people went by their first name and any reference to a last name was really a reference to his father's name (Matthew). Since he did not have a last name, he was asked, via a friend... What are you know as? The reply, from the friend, was a colloquial reference to the type of work he did. Cal-ka-ma-ra was a reference to the odds and ends of clothing that he collected. They were then made into fabric or garments and sold. The spelling came out as COLCHAMIRO.

I am asking my Uncle and Aunts to verify this story and to correct this as they know it.

Here is a message from one of the branches of the Colchamiro Family - 7/7/98:

I am Debra Colchamiro, from the NYC Colchamiro branch, and your web site looks good. Allow me to give you some more extensive info regarding our name. The story we always tell is that our ancestor was a rag merchant in Greece and was very meticulous about picking good scraps; that he would look through the goods as carefully as one looks for leaven on Passover. The prayer that one says after locating all leaven in the house is called "Kal Chamira" and so his friends and associates said he was so picky that he might as well say "Kal Chamira" over his rag finds. Supposedly he was known by this name in Greece and gave it when arriving at Ellis Island, and that the immigration officials invented their own spelling.

My parents are Elliot and Linda Colchamiro. Elliot is the son of Morris and Sarah Colchamiro (nee Mazza, also from Ioannina, Greece). Some of Morris' sisters and brothers were James, Esther.

Uncle Oscar wrote 3/9/99

Dear Marty, About the name Colchamiro, the story that Debra Colchamiro tells is the more correct story of the name. My grandfather would buy things wholesale and would say to the Greeks, I'll buy it all.... I'll make Kol Xamira which is the prayer you say on Passover when you clean the Chomitz out of our house and cast the bread upon the water. So the nickname stuck and when the boy came to America they used the nickname for good luck.

Love .....Uncle Oscar.

Aunt Terry wrote 5/6/99

Dear Martin, I've been enjoying your beautiful Website, and have finally found a little time to add some of my memories, etc. to the interesting stories I've been reading from the family.

Regarding the name, Colchamiro: My cousin, the late Dr. Rae Dalven (the daughter of my father's sister, Esther) wrote a book about the "Jews of Ioannina" and in her chapter regarding names, wrote the following: "Despite the separate family names, much confusion resulted from the similarity of Hebrew patronymics (Elias, SON OF Mathew) which were used legally as surnames. It became necessary to distinguish between people more distinctly. To meet this need, the Ionnina Jews adopted NICKNAMES, a practice common throughout Greece. In many instances, the nicknames were pleasing enough to be adopted as legal surnames. Nicknames derived from occupations, physical characteristics, and character traits." Rae Dalven continues: "My mother's maiden name was

Kalchamira (spelled Colchamiro in the United States). The family explanation is that her father, a cloth merchant, used to examine material as closely as if he were searching for leaven (hametz). This was associated with the statement made the night before the eve of Passover, beginning KAL HAMIRA DE IKA BIRSHT (May all leaven in my possession)."

This may be the best explanation of the origin of the name Colchamiro.

Have you ever wondered how a lovely young Greek girl got the name NANCY, Nona's legal name? When Nona was asked her name at Ellis Island, she said "Speranza" (which actually is of Spanish origin and means Hope), the immigration officer, who did not know its meaning, looked her over, with her dark hair, blue eyes and fair complexion, he may have thought, "What a pretty Irish lassie! Let's call her NANCY".

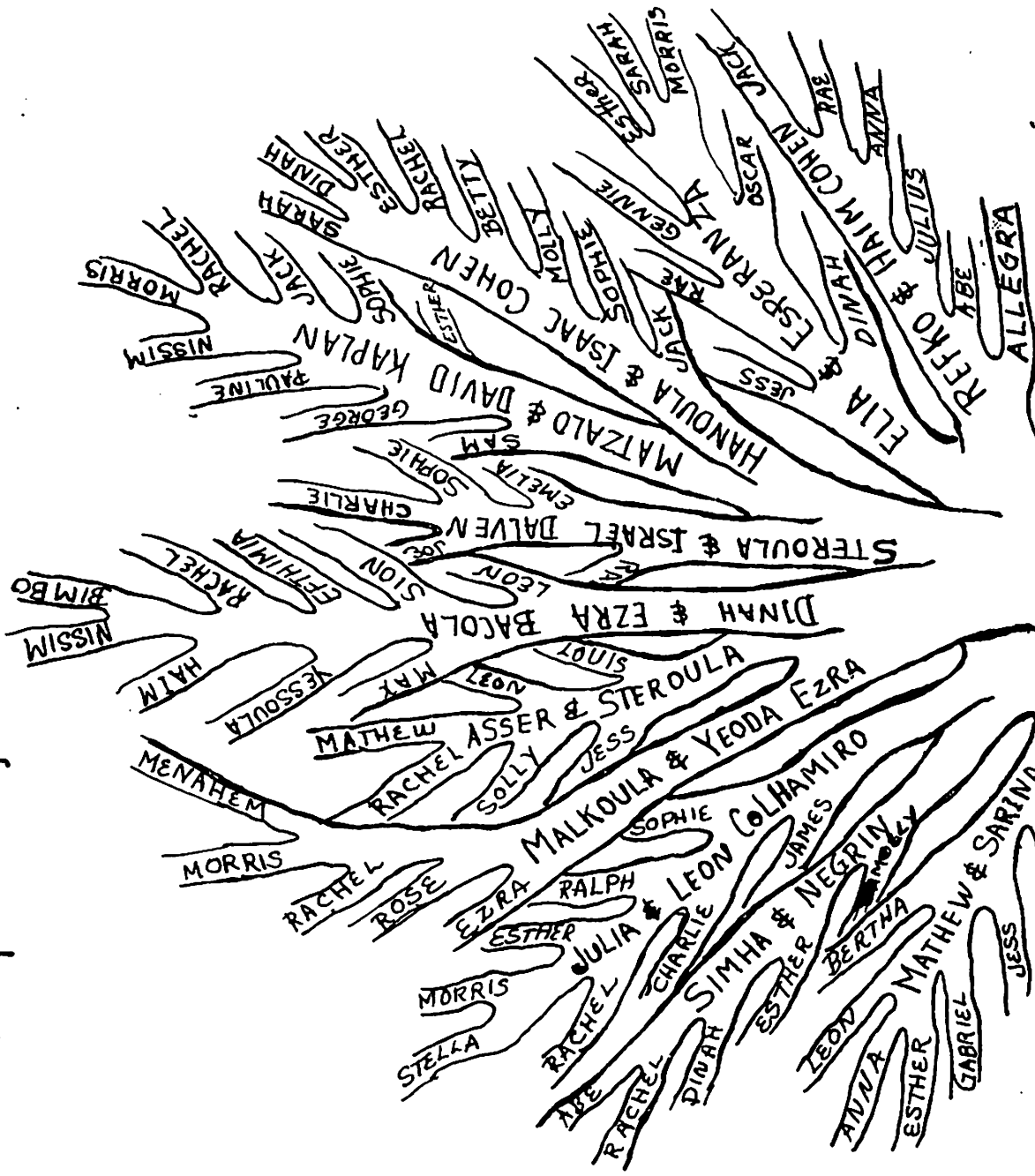
And how about TERRY? In Greek, I was often called Terru by my mother, as a term of endearment. When I lived with my aunt Hanoula (my father's sister) for awhile to finish college, there was an Esther in the household, so they decided that I would be called Terry, and the name stayed with me.

This is enough about names. I will continue with memories of my sisters and brothers in my next message. LOVE, AUNT TERRY LANDAU.

5/11/99 Hi Marty, I just looked at the Colchamiro Family Home Page. I think it's great! My mother told me about it. She is the daughter of Anna Colchamiro, my grandmother. (So I'm a Colchamiro, too.) Though my grandmother's name was Anna, she was called Chanula. Your grandfather, Elias, was her brother. Chanula was married to Isaac Cohen. We called them Nona and Papoo. I have a two-hour video that I made of them. They talk about how they met and married in Ioannina, their memories of coming to America, and of their first factory jobs on the Lower East Side. The video also has pictures of all of their nine children, and their numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. It shows weddings, sedars, births, deaths. If you would like to see it, I would be glad to give you a copy. You might even know some of the people who are in it. I printed some of your home page for my mother, who is 84 and doesn't see very well. She can look at them with a magnifying glass -- she is the one who alerted me to your home page and asked me to check it out. How's that for an 84 year old? I hope we get in touch. You can answer me at this email address, but I don't have access to it every day, so it might take me a few days to answer you back. Best, Vivian Conan (originally from 74th Street in Brooklyn -- maybe you heard of that part of the clan).

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# THE FAMILY TREE OF RACHEL AND YESSOULA CALHAMIRA



RACHEL AND  
YESSOULA  
CALHAMIRA

Mr. & Mrs. May Bacole  
June 1977