

The Rapeport Families of Calitzdorp, Cape Colony.

In the late eighteenth century two Rapeport gentlemen resided in the village of Calitzdorp, Cape Colony. Both men had emigrated from Russia. They were Louis Rapeport and Lazarus Rapeport. It is uncertain whether the two men were brothers, cousins or just landsleit i.e. men from the same town or village in Europe. What is certain, is that both men were in contact with one another during their sojourn in Calitzdorp and the descendants of both men were aware of a family relationship.

Calitzdorp is a village situated 50 kilometres west of the major centre of Oudtshoorn, which was known as the 'Jerusalem of Africa' due to its vibrant Jewish life. The village was named after the Calitz family who were granted land in 1821. The family originally named the area Buffelsvlei, after the local vegetation and animals in the area. In 1853 they donated land for a church and school and a town was established. At one time Calitzdorp was the greatest ostrich producing district in the world and the centre of the feather industry. During the ostrich feather boom in the decades prior to World War One, numerous Jewish immigrants went to Calitzdorp and the surrounding area. They not only bought and sold feathers, but also farmed flocks of ostriches.

Louis (Lewis) Rapeport



Louis Rapeport (1859 -1926), also known as Lewis Rapeport or Max Louis Rapeport arrived in South Africa in 1890. His application for naturalization, dated 16th December 1891, stated that his birth residence was Horadok, Russia and he gave his age as 33 years at the next birthday.¹ His occupation was that of a hawker and at that time, his place of residence in the Colony was Oudtshoorn. He stated that he had been resident in the Colony for one year.

Photograph of Louis Rapeport taken in Oudtshoorn.

Form of Application for Letters of Naturalization under Acts No. 2 of 1883 and No. 35 of 1889.

To the Colonial Secretary of the Cape of Good Hope.

I do hereby apply for Letters of Naturalization in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, and I declare that the answers to the questions hereunder given are true and correct.

1. Name of Applicant (in full) Lewis Rapoport

2. Birth-place (state fully the name of the place and the country in which the place is situated.) Koradok Russia

3. Age next Birthday. Thirty Three years

4. Occupation. Shopkeeper

5. Place of Residence in the Colony. Oudtshoorn

6. Length of time during which the applicant has resided in Colony? One year

7. Does the applicant intend, when Naturalized, to reside in the Colony? Yes

8. Have you ever been convicted and sentenced for any of the following crimes? Treason, Murder, Capital Homicide, Rape, Theft, Fraud, Perjury or Forgery. If so have you received a free pardon? No

Dated at Oudtshoorn
 the 16th day of December 1891

Signature of Applicant: L. Rapoport
 Signature of W. H. Ross: W. H. Ross (Signature of Applicant)

15 DEC 1891
 22
 James S. R.
 Sp. for Messrs
 Lewis & Hennessy
 Oudtshoorn
 15th December 1891

Sir

I have the honor to transmit you the enclosed applications for letters of naturalization from Messrs Lewis Rapoport and Wulf Hennessy together with their declarations of allegiance and stamps of the value of five shillings and respectfully to request that you will be pleased to forward me their letters of naturalization as early as possible.

I have the honor to be
 Sir
 Your most obedient servant
 James S. Ross
 Agent for Applicants

W. H. Ross
 Colonial Secretary
 Cape Town

Letters of Naturalization, 16th December 1891, for Lewis Rapoport.

He moved to Calitzdorp and was a shopkeeper. On 4th December 1892, he married Yetta Fleischer (nee Sebasewitz) (1868-1894), a widow, at the Jewish Synagogue, Oudtshoorn. His wife had an infant daughter from her previous marriage, Rosa Fleischer (1891-1963). Louis Rapoport stated on the marriage certificate that he was a widower.

Marriage Solemnized at Oudtshoorn, in the Parish of Oudtshoorn District of Oudtshoorn 1892

No.	When Married.	Names and Surnames.	Ages.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	After Banns or License.	Consent by whom given, or Judge's Order.
8,	December 4 th 1892.	Lewis Rapoport. and Yetta Fleischer. (nee Sebasewitz).	32.	Widower.	Shopkeeper Calitzdorp.	Oudtshoorn.	After Banns.	Magistrate's Order.
			25.	Widow.		Oudtshoorn.		

Married in Jewish Synagogue at Oudtshoorn. afterwards, after Banns, by me M. Woolpon Minister.

This Marriage was solemnized between us...
 Lewis Rapoport, Bridgroom
 Yetta Fleischer, Bride
 Rosa Sebasewitz

In the presence of us the following witnesses—
 1. Thomas Sebasewitz
 2. M. S. Rapoport

Examined with the Original Register, by me, and found to be correct. **5918**

Minister. M. Woolpon

Marriage of Lewis Rapoport and Yetta Fleischer, Oudtshoorn, 1892.

Eighteen months after the marriage, Yetta Rapeport died at the age of 26 years, on the 12th July 1894 in Calitzdorp.² She was buried in Oudtshoorn. Review of her estate documents of 1895 confirmed that she survived by her infant daughter, Rosa Fleischer from her previous marriage and by her second husband.³ The liquidation account had an entry which stated that one lot of bedding was sold to Lazarus Rapeport for £1.16 at a sale held at Calitzdorp on the 13th April 1895. Following her death, Louis Rapeport moved to the Transvaal Republic. An entry in the estate dated the 8th November 1895, stated that “the executor L Rapeport is at present at or near Pretoria and his signature cannot be obtained”.

List of articles (jewelry etc) bequeathed to Rosa Fleischer - a minor child of Yetta Rapeport born Sebasewitz - in terms of a will made by the said Yetta Rapeport from Sebasewitz & Louis Rapeport dated the 15th June 1894.

- 1 One gold ladies watch & chain
- 2 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- 3 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- 4 " " " " " " " " " " " "
- 5 Six silver spoons & 1 silver soup plate
- 6 one Plate's painted stand
- 7 " pair " candlesticks
- 8 " gold bracelet
- 9 " " brooch
- 10 " pair diamond earrings

We hereby certify that we have inspected the above articles & that we consider the sum of Twenty pounds to be a fair and reasonable value for the same.

L. J. J. J.
L. J. J. J.

Calitzdorp
17 August 1895

12. 10. 95.

Yetta Sebasewitz
wid of Jacob Fleischer
wife of Louis Rapeport.
12. 7. 94 Calitzdorp
Oudtshoorn

R N 1755

Rs. 1000.

L. A. to Louis Rapeport, &
Frederick Brink Jentry
L. C. to same persons Jentry Jentry

Circular

to Mr Rapeport returned unclaimed

Sale held at Calitzdorp on the 13th April 1895 for sale of the estate of the late Yetta Rapeport born Sebasewitz -

1 lot Bedding - Lazarus Rapeport	2	-
do do do do	11	16

Certificat correct

J. J. J. J.

Documents from Estate Yetta Rapeport (born Sebasewitz, formerly Fleischer).

On 23rd June 1895 Louis Rapeport married another widow, Louisa Etten (nee Kantor) (1871-1930) in Johannesburg. Louisa had two young daughters from her previous marriage, Rosa Etten (1893-1961) and Annie Etten (1894-1918) who was

called Suzie by the family. In 1896, whilst residing in the Transvaal, Louis Rapeport applied for a bar license.⁴ Later that year, his wife, Louisa, gave birth to a son, William Rapeport (1896-1952) on the 25 December 1896 in Fordsburg, Johannesburg. Following the birth, the family moved from the Transvaal to Calitzdorp. Two more sons were born in Calitzdorp. They were Martin Rapeport (1899-1976) and Lazarus Rapeport (1903 -1961).

PLICAAT ORIGINEEL REGISTER. *Van Pretoria tot Johannesburg.*

Amptelijk bevestiging te *Johannesburg.* — District *N.O.R. Goudvelden.* —

No.	WED. VAN DEN DORP.	VOLLE NAAM DER BRUWEDER.	WED. VAN DEN DORP.	WED. VAN DEN DORP.	WED. VAN DEN DORP.	WED. VAN DEN DORP.	WED. VAN DEN DORP.	WED. VAN DEN DORP.	WED. VAN DEN DORP.	WED. VAN DEN DORP.		
<i>23</i>	<i>Louis Rapeport</i>	<i>Louisa Etten</i>	<i>(geb. Kantor)</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Louis Rapeport</i>	<i>(geb. Kantor)</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Louis Rapeport</i>	<i>(geb. Kantor)</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Louis Rapeport</i>	<i>(geb. Kantor)</i>
<i>215 Juni</i>	<i>1895</i>	<i>Louisa Etten</i>	<i>(geb. Kantor)</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Louis Rapeport</i>	<i>(geb. Kantor)</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Louis Rapeport</i>	<i>(geb. Kantor)</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Louis Rapeport</i>	<i>(geb. Kantor)</i>

Dit Hovelijk is bevestigd door mij op heden, den *23^{de}* dag van *Juni* 189*5*.

In tegenwoordigheid der ondergetekende getuigen

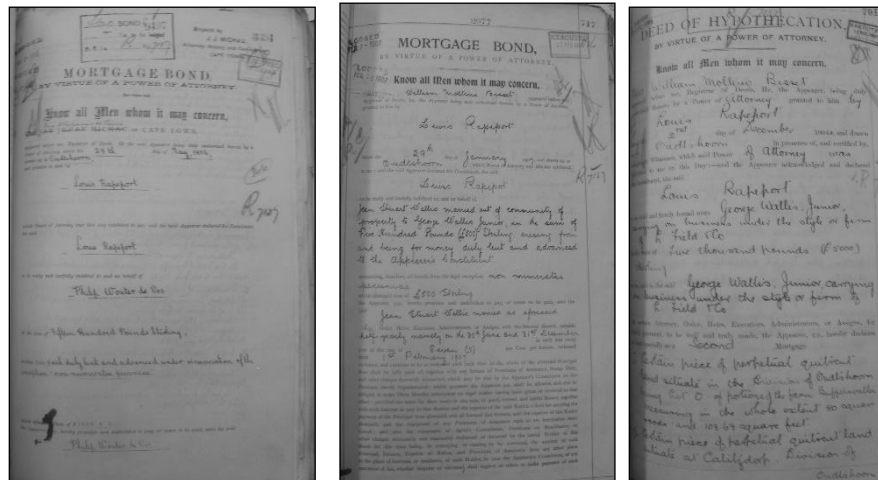
Getuigen: *1 B. Geyser*, *2 M. J. van der Merwe*

Dit Hovelijk is voltrekken tussen ons *Louis Rapeport*

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Marriage certificate Louis Rapeport and Louisa Etten (nee Kantor) 23rd June 1895, Johannesburg.

Whilst resident in Calitzdorp, from 1903 to 1907, Louis Rapeport incurred significant debt on a property which was part of the Calitz family farm Buffel's Vallei (Valley). The debt amounts incurred from numerous mortgage bonds exceeded £12575.⁵⁻¹⁰ The flourishing ostrich feather trade collapsed in 1914 with the outbreak of World War One as feathers could not be exported and it was compounded by a devastating drought which lasted from 1914 to 1916. The Rapeport family, together with other families, were left destitute.



Mortgage bonds incurred by Louis Rapeport.

In 1916, the Rapeport family moved to Rustenburg, Transvaal. In December 1916 the older daughter of Louisa Rapeport, Rosa Etten married Solomon Goldstein, and the couple went to live in Pretoria. During the Great Flu epidemic of 1918, Louisa's younger daughter, Annie Etten died and was buried in Rustenburg. Her tombstone was inscribed 'In Loving Memory of Neche Mina Rapport. Beloved daughter of Mr & Mrs L Rapport. Died 15 November 1918.' Regarding the three Rapeport sons, the eldest, William and youngest, Lazarus remained in Rustenburg. William initially worked as a junior staff member for Philip Wulfsohn, a general dealer, in the town. He was promoted to the position of General Manager. In 1933, William opened a clothing outfitter and draper's store. He was active in civic affairs and served as a town councilor. He was the only Jew to serve as Mayor of Rustenburg and was Mayor from 1946-1947. Lazarus, who was born 'deaf and dumb' remained in Rustenburg and lived with his mother. The middle son, Martin, moved to Kensington, Johannesburg after he got married.



Annie Etten (R) known as Suzie Rapeport, and William Rapeport (L), Calitzdorp 1908.



Martin Rapeport (L) and Lazarus Rapeport (R) were born in Calitzdorp.

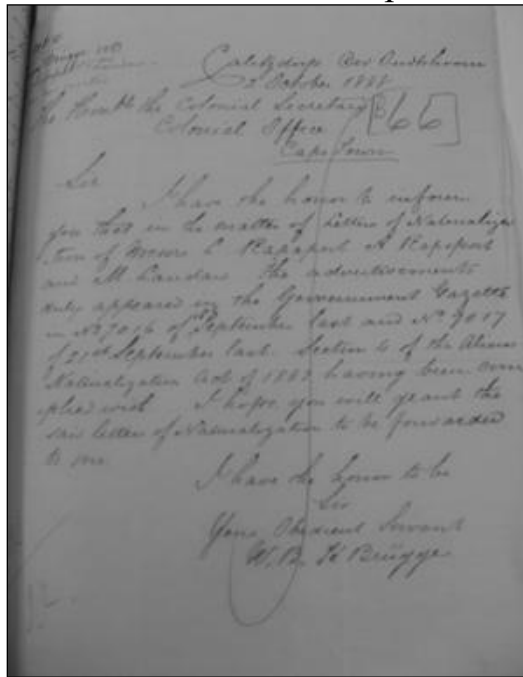
Louis Rapeport died on the 6 April 1926 in Pretoria. He is buried in the Rebecca Street Cemetery, Pretoria. His English name is inscribed as Max Louis Rapeport and the Hebrew inscription on the tombstone is Menachem Yehuda Leib bar Shalom Zalman Ze'ev, thereby documenting his father's name as Shalom Zalman Ze'ev.



Grave of Louis Rapeport, Rebecca Street Cemetery, Pretoria.

Lazarus Rapoport (Rapeport)

Lazarus Rapoport (1856-1924) was born in Russia and married Rose Kabaker (1870-1950) in her hometown, Ludwinow, Russian Empire (Liudvinavas, Lithuania). In 1888 their daughter, Ida Rapoport (1888-1940), was born in Ludwinow. The family emigrated to South Africa and settled in Calitzdorp, Cape Colony. In 1888 Lazarus Rapoport applied for naturalization, together with A. Rapoport and Moses Landau (1855-1920).¹¹ Lazarus Rapoport and Moses Landau were brothers-in-law and had married the Kabaker sisters, Rose and Rebecca Leah (1861-1941). The naturalization application which contained declarations of L. and A. Rapoport, from Calitzdorp, was dated 29th August 1888 and was addressed to the Honorable the Colonial Secretary, Colonial Office Cape Town. On the 2nd October 1888 a letter stated that advertisements duly appeared in the government gazette in No. 7016, 18 September last and No. 7017, 21 September last.¹²



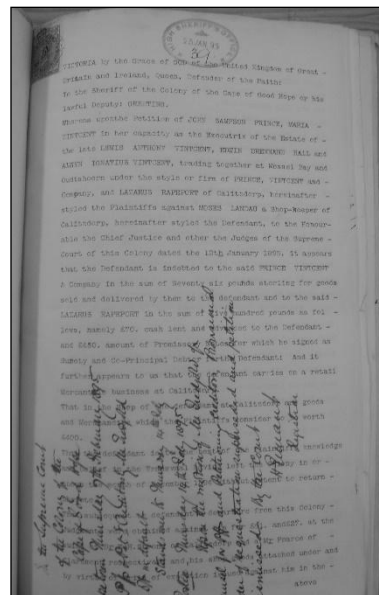
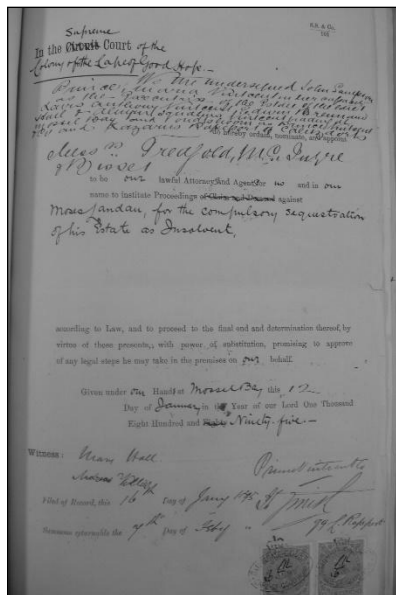
Document for naturalization for L Rapoport, 1888.

Lazarus Rapoport's two sons were born in Calitzdorp - Samuel Rapoport (1891-1974) on the 26 August 1891 and Joseph Irwin Rapoport (1894-1981) on the 5 December 1894.

The brothers-in-laws, Lazarus Rapoport and Moses Landau both resided in Calitzdorp with their young families. However, their friendship ended in 1895 following a court case between the two men. A record of proceedings of a provisional case involving Prince Vincent and Company, and Lazarus Rapoport against Moses Landau was held in the Supreme Court of the Colony of the Cape of

Good Hope, Cape Town with representation by the law firm Tredgold, McIntyre and Bisset. Moses Landau was listed as a shop keeper (retail mercantile business) in Calitzdorp.¹³ A request was made to the court that Moses Landau's estate be sequestrated, as he was indebted to the company for the sum of £66 for goods sold and delivered to him. He in turn was indebted to Lazarus Rapeport for the sum of £500 which consisted of £70 cash lent and £430 made up of promissory notes for which he (Lazarus Rapeport) had signed surety and was co-principal debtor for the defendant.

In 1900, following the collapse of his business, Moses Landau, his wife and daughter Ada (1885-1967) left Calitzdorp and emigrated to the USA. The family arrived in New York on the 15 April 1900 and travelled to Chicago, Illinois where they were registered as 'boarders' in the home of his parents-in-law, Aron Kabaker (1839-1917) and Minnie Kabaker nee Ruthstein (1837-1927).



Provisional case - Prince Vincent and Company,
Lazarus Rapeport versus Moses Landau, 1895.

In Calitzdorp, the two Rapeport men, Lazarus Rapeport and Louis Rapeport, were in contact with one another. Confirmation of their interaction was documented when Lazarus Rapeport bought one lot of bedding from the estate of Yetta Rapeport, wife of Louis Rapeport which was sold to him for £1.16 at a sale held at Calitzdorp.

In 1909 Rose Rapoport and her 3 children left South Africa and emigrated to the USA to join her parents in Chicago, Illinois. The 1910 United States Federal Census

Lazarus Rappeport did not join his family in the USA and remained in South Africa. He left Calitzdorp and lived in Queenstown where he worked as a speculator and commission agent. He died in the Queens Central Hospital, Cradock on 31st March 1924, aged 68 years and was buried in Cradock. Included with his estate documents was his will, in which two spellings of the surname are written – Rappeport and Rapeport.¹⁴ He requested that half his estate be left to his wife, Rosa Rapeport born Kabaker, who resided at 5011 Forest Ville Ave, Chicago Ill. and that the other half was to be divided in equal shares to his 3 children. He also stated that an amount of less than £50 be devoted towards a tombstone for his grave. The executor and administrator of his estate was Reverend A.P. Bender, of the Gardens Synagogue, Cape Town. Included in his file was a letter from the proprietor of the Central Hotel, Middelburg, Mr. J Melmed, who wrote to the executor that there was a parcel of ostrich feathers missing, which belonged to the late L. Rappeport, and he was unsure whether the parcel was in East London, Port Elizabeth or other towns in the area. Mr Melmed stated in his letter that the deceased had been very interested in the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and often spoke about it. On numerous occasions, he took the Sunday Times newspaper from Mr. Melmed and posted it to his relatives in America. The tombstone in the Cradock cemetery is inscribed “In memory of Lazarus Rappeport, who departed this life on March 3rd, 1924, aged 68 years”. The date of his death is incorrectly inscribed by 28 days as he died on March 31st, 1924.

DEATH NOTICE
 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS CONTAINED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF ESTATES ACT, 1913.

Name of the deceased: Lazarus Rappeport

Age and Nationality of the deceased: 68 years - Jew

Address of the deceased: Queenstown

Address of the deceased: Queenstown

Occupation of the deceased: Speculator & Commission Agent

Place of residence of the deceased: Chicago, Ill.

Wife: Rosa Rappeport, born Kabaker (in Community) (Deceased)

Children: Ella Rappeport, Samuel Rappeport, Joseph Rappeport

Date of death: 31st March 1924

Place of death: Queens Central Hospital, Cradock

Signature: A. P. Bender

WILL 492 No. 4090
 21 MAY 1924
 Middelburg, Cape Town

This is the last Will and Testament of me LAZARUS RAPPEPORT (or RAPPEPORT) of Queenstown, Cape Province.

I hereby cancel and annul all former Wills or other Testamentary Acts and declare the following to be and contain my last Will and Testament.

I nominate and appoint my wife ROSA RAPPEPORT (or Rapeport), born KABAKER, of 5011 Forest Ville Avenue, Chicago, Ill. to be the heiress of one-half of the whole of my estate and effects, and as to the remaining half, I appoint as heirs thereof, in equal shares, my three children ELLA RAPPEPORT (or Rapeport), SAMUEL RAPPEPORT (or Rapeport) and JOSEPH RAPPEPORT (or Rapeport).

As Executor of this my Will and Administrator of my estate and effects I nominate and appoint, with power of substitution, the Rev. A. P. BENDER of the Gardens Synagogue, Cape Town.

I further desire that out of my estate a sum not exceeding Fifty Pounds (£50) Sterling shall be devoted by my Executor towards a tombstone on my grave.

I hereby reserve the right at any time hereafter to make any alteration to this my Will.

Signed by me at Cradock, C.P. this 20th day of March, 1924, in the presence of the undersigned witnesses.

L. RAPPEPORT.

Death notice and Estate papers of Lazarus Rappeport, 1924.



Grave of Lazarus Rappeport, Cradock Jewish Cemetery.

Contact between the two Rapeport families.

In 1963, Jack Rapeport (1925-1992), grandson of Louis Rapeport, travelled to Chicago, Illinois, USA to try and establish contact with the children of Lazarus Rappeport. Jack was not exactly sure of the relationship between the two families but knew that the family were relatives. He knew that they resided in Chicago and that their surname was spelt differently. Jack met the two sons of 'Mr. L. Rapeport from Calitzdorp', Samuel Rapp and Joseph Rappeport, and he also met a grandson, Donald (Don) Louis Rappeport (1926-2012), the son of Joseph Rappeport. Jack was not very well received by the family. According to the two sons, the family believed that Jack was in fact a grandson of their estranged father, Lazarus Rappeport, who had abandoned his family by remaining in South Africa. The family was not aware that there were in fact two Rapeport families who resided in Calitzdorp at the same time. Thirty-four years later, in January 1997, Don Rappeport, son of Joseph Rappeport and grandson of Lazarus Rappeport, visited South Africa to try and find his family roots. One of the places he visited was Calitzdorp, but he was unable to find much information about the family. He tried to contact Jack Rapeport and went specifically to Durban to try and locate him. Jack had made Aliyah in 1982 and passed away in 1992. Don was put in touch with Jack's younger brother, Louis Rapeport, who lived in Durban and Don travelled to Johannesburg to meet Jack's sister and the extended Rapeport family, whom he regarded as his first cousins. In subsequent years, with the assistance of documents obtained from the National Archives of South Africa, it was clarified that there were indeed two Rapeport men

4. National Archives of South Africa Depot TAB Source SS reference R2142/96 L Rapeport. Re Zyn Ontnomen Bar Licentie. Dated 1896/02/28. Document is unavailable.
5. National Archives of South Africa Depot KAB Source DOC reference 4/1/940:3968. Mortgage Bond Louis Rapeport. Notarial bond dated 27 May 1903.
6. National Archives of South Africa Depot KAB Source DOC reference 4/1/1064:4269. Mortgage Bond. Louis Rapeport. Dated 3 May 1904.
7. National Archives of South Africa Depot KAB Source DOC reference 4/1/1097:7916 Mortgage Bond. Louis Rapeport. Deed of Hypothecation granting power of attorney to William Molteno Bisset by Louis Rapeport dated 2 December 1904, drawn up at Oudtshoorn.
8. National Archives of South Africa Depot KAB Source DOC reference 4/1/1175:382 Mortgage Bond Louis Rapeport. Notarial Bond regarding money owed by Louis Rapeport to Johannes Bredell of Calitzdorp. Dated 1906.
9. National Archives of South Africa Depot KAB Source DOC reference 4/1/1207:3394 Mortgage Bond Louis Rapeport. Dated 29 May 1906 regarding the farm Buffels Valley.
10. National Archives of South Africa Depot KAB Source DOC reference 4/1/1243:717 Mortgage Bond Lewis Rapeport. Dated 29 January 1907, indebted to Jean Stuart Wallis. This document states that 'the Louis Rapeport and Lewis Rapeport is one and the same person'.
11. National Archives of South Africa Depot KAB Source CO reference 4263: B64 1888. Memorial received from WB Brugge enclosing declarations of L and A Rapeport Calitzdorp. 29 August 1888.
12. National Archives of South Africa Depot KAB Source CO reference 4263: B66. Memorial received from WB Brugge regarding letters of naturalization of L and A Rapeport and M Landau. Calitzdorp District of Oudtshoorn 2 October 1888. Letter that advertisements duly appeared in the government gazette in No 7016 18 September last and No 7017 21 September last.
13. National Archives of South Africa Depot KAB Source CSC reference 2/2/1/228:20. Record of proceedings of provisional case. Prince Vincent and Co. Lazarus Rapeport versus Moses Landau 1895

14.National Archives of South Africa Depot KAB Source MOOC reference
6/9/2600 01 4056, Rapoport, Lazarus. Estate Papers 1924

Compiled by Naomi Schamroth Rapeport
Great granddaughter of Louis Rapeport.
January 2026, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Family trees:

<https://www.geni.com/people/Louis-Lewis-Rapeport/6000000009974208797>

<https://www.geni.com/people/Lazarus-Rapeport-Rapeport/6000000001619386103>.