

Edelberg Stories

These are a collection of stories about members of the Edelberg family.

The Edelberg Family 1894- 1993
Author: Ceil Edelberg via Muriel Arnold

The most satisfactory way to become acquainted with a family history is through the words of its members so I will begin with a letter written to me (Muriel Arnold) on February 6, 1970 by my eldest aunt, Ceil Edelberg Gumbert.

“I was born in August 1894, in Colonie Livovo, Khersonka Gubernia, near Kherson on the Dnieper River. My mother’s name was Luba and my father’s Chaim, they were in modest circumstances, but were good people who believed in live and let live. However, the Jewish people were persecuted under Tsar Nicholas and there was one pogrom after another; they were always the scapegoat no matter what went wrong.

My grandparents on my mother’s side I never knew, they died very young and mother at thirteen was left to shift for herself, she had a sister Sonia, a brother Abram and the youngest sister Dunia. Sonia was married and lived in Mayatchka and had a wonderful family. I remember visiting them as a little girl, it was all so exciting, they were considered what they called in Russia *intelegensia*, meaning higher class, Mother’s brother never married, he was a great scholar, went to school in Odessa, graduating from the University there. He was my teacher and my idol, he lived with us, everyone used to address him as Abram Ospovitch Levenstein, he always knew who needed help and gave so much of himself to others. Dunia, mother’s youngest sister (Merna’s mother) was very beautiful, I remember when she was married to a man from Melitopol, we went to visit them and even as a child I remember the scenery was beautiful, it was near Yalta. We traveled at night and I was scared of the dark.

Mother and Dad had one son, Yosel, and daughters Ceil, Minnie, Clara and Sarah. Their only son was their treasure, he was about ten years old when he was stricken with a disease. My father took him to the hospital in Odessa, he was there six weeks had surgery and was brought home to die, he had cancer of the liver, the dreaded disease that they are still searching a cure for.

Right after this, the war broke out between Russia and Japan, my father had been in the army for several years as a young man, he was a musician and had played for the Tsar in Nikolaief, my uncle Abram insisted that my father should leave for another country, anywhere to get away, Russia was not worth fighting for, perhaps South America. I had read a great deal about North America and convinced my father, even as a child, I felt that I was born in Russia, but my heart was born in America. I continue feeling this way. The way was on in 1904 and 1905. My father was here a year before he sent for his family. Life was not easy at any time especially leaving tragedy behind. He had brothers, Schloma, Peisah and Faiva and two sisters Chaya and Beilla who died very young. I knew my grandfather Beana, I was a very young child when I would see him and feel sorry that he was old and not well. Being that my uncle was my teacher, I had more education than most children have had at my age, he encouraged me to have one year of Latin and German when I was ten. I also read many books from his library which were considered for adults, but he thought were important for me to read them

therefore when we arrived here I had quite an education to start with, My sister Minnie was younger, Clara was four years old and Sarah two.

We left Colonie Livovo in 1906. My uncle Abram went with us to Odessa, we crossed the Black Sea, it was stormy, everyone was seasick, we were there for a number of days, my uncle took me to the stores and I fell in love with a pair of red shoes that were too tight for me but I wanted them so badly and my uncle being so nice to all of us, bought them for me. Later on, I had quite a bit of pain from wearing those shoes and on the ship had to spend most of my time at the doctor's office, first class, it was quite a treat as we came over steerage.

We were all heartbroken when we left our uncle in Odessa and cried bitterly, we went to Libau and then on to Hamburg, Germany where we waited a week to get on the liner Pretoria of the Hamburg American Line. It was quite an experience, everyone was sick in bed, but being a good sailor I used to walk around listening to the waves hit the deck as though we were going to sink any minute. Something never to be forgotten to this very day.

We were three families crossing the Atlantic from the same town, three mothers and eleven children. What a sight at times! The Edelbergs, Schlamovitch and the Folacs (Pollacks (?)).

When we arrived in this country we felt like kissing the very ground we walked on and is it a wonder, when in Livovo Russia we were scared to death that the mujicks would come at any time and massacre us in an awful pogrom? I remember when we all sat on the floor, some of our belongings tied in a spread and the Jewish men guarding the homes. It was only by the Grace of God that we are here and upon my mother's brother who made it all possible, who was so wonderful.

After being in this country for a few years, we sent him a ticket to come to this country, however, he returned it for the following reasons: a library of hundreds of books that he could not take with him, he had made Professor of Schools at Nova-Poltafka, and later Judge, which was most unusual for a Jew, but he was an unusual person.

I shall always remember him, he died at 65 of typhoid fever. He molded the early years of my life and I am more than grateful. I am a better person for having known him."