



ELLIS COUSINS

Many Trees . . . One Family
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Genealogy isn't just about the stats. It's mostly about the people. Ida DONCHUY married Samuel ELLIS in 1922 in New York. Both were of Russian descent. Both immigrated to the US in 1909/1910. These are Ida's memories of her trip to the United States in 1910 aboard the last voyage of the Lusitania. Based on an interview she did on her 94th birthday with Paul Siegreist, 20Aug1990.

Ida Donchuy Ellis, Russian Immigrant

Ida DONCHUY was born in Linsk, Russia on 30 Aug 1896; however the family later moved to Kiev. She was fortunate to live a fairly comfortable life. Her father was a scientist developing new soaps, specializing in oils. Her mother was a housewife. Although her father was resented for being Jewish, he was still allowed the privileges that went with his position.

Anti-Semitism was not something Ida remembered much. She had lived, schooled and played in a completely Jewish community where the hatred only reached her occasionally. She did recall witnessing lootings and stonings, murders that frightened her, but what she remembered most were the many nice Russian people who would help to hide them any time there was danger.

It was Ida's maternal grandparents who pushed for the move to the USA where they and other family members were already living in New York. Ida's mom and all the children were excited about seeing family again, but Ida's dad was more nervous about leaving their relative comfort to face an unknown world. In the end, Mom won out, and Ida's grandparents sent eight tickets for Ida, her parents, and five brothers in Kiev. The family packed most of their clothes, leaving everything other than clothing behind, and left Kiev for Amsterdam. The train trip lasted several days and felt only excitement. She felt no regret about leaving Russia, nor did she ever expect to return.

They stayed in very nice rooms over

the eight day wait in Amsterdam, as arranged by her grandparents, before they at last were able to board the Lusitania. On the ship, the children were allowed to wander, and Ida found she could get much better food on the upper levels. Otherwise, the food was awful and she felt seasick even in calm seas. During the two week boat ride, she played games with the many children who were onboard, none of whom came from her hometown.

It would be the last voyage the Lusitania ever completed.

At age 14, her first sight of the USA was the Statue of Liberty. Ida was told it represented peace and love, a gift from France. They arrived at Ellis Island on 10Feb1910. It was very crowded, and the wait to be examined for health problems was very long, but she wasn't frightened. Her mom had made them wash every day on the boat, despite difficulty in finding extra clean water. Her parents were questioned extensively but didn't seem to mind. They were examined for vermin, TB, eye disorders, sores. The family all had new clothes for entrance into their new country as their mom didn't want the family to look like paupers. Her dad's coat was even mink lined with a fur cap.

Her uncles met them at Ellis Island and took them on the subway to get to her grandma's house where the family had a huge spread to welcome them to their new home. It was very exciting.

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