

From Mitau to Manhattan: Gussie Abramowitz' 1904 Journey to America

Background

My grandmother, Gussie (Gutte) Abramowitz, was born to Hirsch Leib HaLevi Abramowitz and Etel (Yetta/Jetta) Smarkovitch circa 1884 in the Salapils, Latvia, area. However, she always told me she grew up in Courland, so I believe the family moved to Mitau when she was small. I base that on her brother Sam's ship manifest¹ and her father's passport². She was one of ten children. From family stories we know her father was a butcher and possibly also raised cattle for the Czar's army. As a child, Gussie had an affinity for languages and could read and speak Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, Latvian, and German. (Note that English was not one of the languages she learned as a young girl.) She also graduated from the gymnasium, which was unusual for a girl at that time. This also says a lot about her parents who allowed a girl to go to school. A gymnasium was a secondary school used to prepare students for higher education.

Mitau was the capital of the government of Courland.³ It was situated about 20 miles from Riga. In Mitau, now known as Jelgava, the Jews leaned more toward the Germans in language, manners and dress, than those of Poland and Lithuania as the German culture was held in higher esteem. However, many professions, and even certain seats in the theater were closed to Jews. Life for Jews was never easy. By 1904, the Jewish population in Mitau was 8,402 Jews out of 35,000 people. With improved railroad facilities, particularly the Riga-Dünaburg, Mitau essentially became a suburb of Riga.^{4 5} (pictured above, Mitau circa 1904)



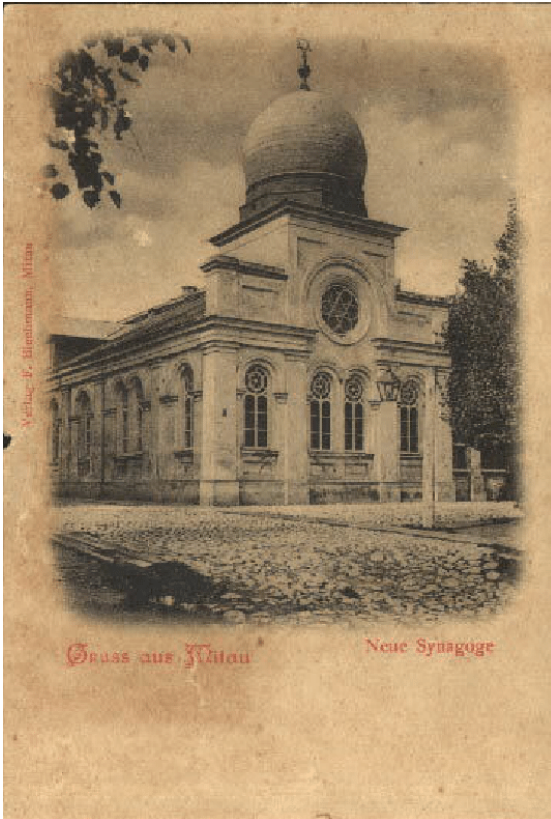
¹ Ship Manifest for Simon Abramowitz, "New York Passenger Arrival Lists (Ellis Island), 1892-1924", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JFBB-Q44> : 2 March 2021), Simon Abramowitz, 1904.

² Passport of Hirss Abramovics, Born 27/05/1844, handed in to the police in Riga, Latvia, 1919 – 1940, Yad Yashem, The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&s_id=&s_lastName=Abramowitz&s_firstName=Hirsch&s_place=Latvia&s_dateOfBirth=&cluster=true

³ The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, Jelgava, <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Jelgava>

⁴ The Jewish Encyclopedia.com Mitau: by Herman Rosenthal <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10883-mitau>

⁵ Picture of Jelgava from <https://www.jelgava.lv/en/city/jelgava-in-short/history/>



According to the memoir of Dr. Isidorus Brennsohn who grew up in Mitau in the late 1800's, most of the houses were single-story wooden structures. There were also a few stone houses and the grand houses of the nobles.

Children in the Jewish Schools were taught in German. You only learned Latvian if you mixed with the locals or had a Latvian maid.⁶

Did our Abramowitz family attend the Great Synagogue in Mitau? At that time there were 3 synagogues in Mitau. In 1864, the old Mitau synagogue was rebuilt. Under the direction of a local merchant, Samuel Friedlieb. According to Brennsohn, there was a wonderful Rabbi, Salomen Pucher, who after more than 30 years there left for Riga feeling the congregation did not understand him. Rabbi Pucher followed "Haskalah" ideas (Enlightenment), and the Jewish community at that time was mainly interested in charity work.

The intellectuals in Mitau admired Germany and all things German. Overall, though, according to Dr. Brennsohn, Mitau was "provincial (narrow-minded) and parochial". The two main topics of conversation were fires and deaths. Fires

were put out by a bucket brigade and with wooden structures were all too common.⁷

We don't know if our Abramowitz family lived in the country since our great-grandfather was said to be a butcher and to also possibly raise cattle, or if they lived in the city? What we can assume is that they were religious and educated, but not wealthy.

Gussie's older brother, Max, immigrated to the United States around 1891. Although I was told he left to escape being conscripted into the Czar's army, he was already about 24 years old when he left. In the New World, he worked hard as an ice and coal peddler saving money over the years to eventually send for four of his siblings. The first selected to leave home was brother, Samuel. Five months later, two of his sisters, Gussie and Sarah, ventured out.

Interestingly, Grandma Gussie always told me she came to the United States by herself at age 16. However, upon finding her ship manifest, we now know she came with her sister and probably a cousin.

⁶ Sketches from My Life, Especially of My Youth, Isidorus Brennsohn, M.D. <https://ninakossman.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/brensonmemoir.pdf> pages 6, 23, 28. And 114.

⁷ The Great Synagogue of Mitau Reform or Consensus? Choral Synagogues in the Russian Empire - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Great-Synagogue-in-Mitau-Postcard-early-20th-century-Courtesy-of-the-Gross-Family_fig6_342404130 [accessed 19 Feb, 2023]

Her age on the manifest was listed as 22. However, this could have been done just to make them appear older.⁸



When Grandma Gussie told us she came over on a ship, we never questioned her. However, there was a lot more to that journey than just one ship. They had to purchase tickets, stay in hostels in strange cities, walk for miles, possibly ride in horse and carts, travel by train, and sail in four kinds of water vessels.

What follows is a detailed description of what the journey to the New World was probably like for the two sisters. If there was more than one choice that Gussie and Sarah could have made regarding their journey, I presented both, as we will never know for sure, which option they decided upon.

Preparations

1904: The sisters were finally going to America. There must have been many letters going back and forth with Max to arrange the trip for the girls.⁹ The steamship company had to be chosen for them as well as their date of travel. Since Max was sending the money for their trip, that also had to be coordinated. Where and when would they pick up the money? How were they going to get to the steamship?

In Russia at that time, no one could leave or travel without a passport. Passports were needed for both internal and external travel. Thus, the sisters had to have the proper documents to leave or had to be prepared to bribe the officials.

Max chose the Scandinavian American steamship line. They would be sailing on the ship, the *S.S. Island*. When Max emigrated, he sailed in the steerage section of a different steamship line from Antwerp. The Scandinavian American line, however, did not have a steerage section but had what they called a third class. Is that why he chose this ship so his sisters would be more comfortable? There were also steamship price wars in 1904 to attract more customers. Was this why the Scandinavian Line created a third class in place of steerage? Their brother, Sam, who sailed a few months before them, travelled on a different steamship line and was in the steerage section.

Based on the ship manifest for Gussie (Gutte) and her younger sister, Sarah (Soreh), my guess is that they were also travelling with a cousin, Feige Abramsohn¹⁰, who was living in Libau, Latvia. Libau was a

⁸ New York, Passenger Lists, 1920-1977, Year: 1904; Arrival: New York, New York, USA; Microfilm Serial: T715, 1897-1957; Line: 17; Page Number: 21. Ancestry.com, Publisher

⁹ Keep in mind that mail could take weeks to get from the US to Latvia as it had to go by steamship and then get from the port area to Mitau.

¹⁰ I believe that Feige was a cousin because I discovered a DNA connection with 2 different people who share the name Abramsohn in their trees. Also, in researching Feige, I discovered her father's name was Reuven HaLevy Abramson and my great-grandfather's name was Hirsch HaLevy Abramowitz. Hirsch and Reuven had different

port area where they could board a small steamship to take them to Copenhagen, which is where the steamship the *S.S. Island* was departing from. Therefore, arrangements to get to Libau also had to be made, including staying over and then getting to the port area the next day or so.

With all the background preparations completed, everything was set in motion for as smooth a trip as possible.

At the agreed upon time, Gussie's father probably went with the girls, or by himself, to the nearest Western Union office to receive the money that Max was wiring. By 1900, Western Union had two international underseas cables.¹¹ Once Max had paid the money to a telegraph office in New York, the operator transmitted a message to "wire" the money to an office in Mitau. Passwords and code books authorized the release of the money to the Abramowitz' in Mitau.¹²

The big day arrived. The girls were packed and ready to leave. The unpaved roads were always dusty, so they probably wore boots. The weather in August was pleasant but cool¹³ so they probably had a shawl draped around their shoulders. They probably carried a bag with a few meager items and some food prepared by their mother. Based on what my Uncle Max, Gussie's brother, liked to eat when he lived with us in the late 1950s, their mother probably packed black bread, boiled potatoes, and herring. They probably sewed pockets on the inside of their dresses to hide some of their travel money. There would be food available for them on the boat, but would it be kosher enough for them to eat, or to their liking?

The Train Station

To get to Libau, they could hire a horse and cart, or they could take the train which now went from Mitau to Libau with one transfer stop. Let's assume they boarded the train for the first leg of their journey. Imagine the family walking the two girls to the train station, or did their father own a horse and cart? Hiring one would have added to the overall cost, so I assume they chose to walk if he did not own a horse and cart. It was common for people to walk 3 to 5 miles a day, so I imagine they walked to the station.

How emotional that must have been knowing they would not see their parents again. Did they know that their brother, Abe, would follow them to America, or were they saying good-bye to all their siblings who were staying behind, too?

fathers, but I believe they could have been first cousins. The names Abramsohn and Abramowitz both mean "son of Abraham".

¹¹ Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, Western Union https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Union

¹² Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Wire transfer https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wire_transfer#:~:text=Once%20a%20sender%20had%20paid,almost%20%242.5%20million%20each%20year.

¹³ The average temperature in Jelgava during late August is 68 degrees F. with the wind temperature making it feel like 63 degrees F. The average rainfall is 3.5 inches. <https://www.whereandwhen.net/when/europe/latvia/jelgava/august/>



The Mitau Train Station opened in 1868 and is still located at Stacijas iela 1. In 1904, a depot was added which housed 12 locomotives.¹⁴

Depiction of the Mitau Train Station from the website *Industrial Heritage For Tourism*¹⁵



The map shows that by 1904, there were railway routes between Jelgava (Mitau) and Libau (Liepāja)¹⁶. Note that there was no direct train route back then, though.

¹⁴ The Jelgava Locomotive Depot Museum <https://www.railwaymuseum.lv/lv/node/1123>

¹⁵ From the website *Industrial Heritage for Tourism* <https://industrialheritage.travel/objects/railroad-museum-exposition-in-jelgava/62>

¹⁶ Railway expansion in Latvia at the turn of the 19th and 20th century Epoch and School: Beginnings of Architectural Education at the Riga Polytechnic - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-expansion-of-railway-network-in-the-territory-of-Latvia-in-the-turn-of-the-19-th-and_fig1_338830068 [accessed 19 Feb, 2023]

First, the girls had to get their tickets. Ahead of time, they would have looked in Bradshaw's Continental Rail Guide for ticket prices and train times. These rail guides also contained advertisements for steamship companies and hostels in various ports. They were very useful booklets.

As you can see below from the price schedule for 1913, ticket prices went by the distance of the trip and the class you wanted to sit in on the train. I assume the girls bought a third-class ticket since they were travelling third-class on the steamship and because they had limited funds.

If it is about 110 miles from Mitau to Libau, which was about 170 versts, a third-class ticket would have cost 250 kopecks, or about 2 Rubles.¹⁷ In 1904, 2 Rubles would have been approximately \$50.¹⁸ Today that equates to approximately \$1,680.73 per ticket.¹⁹ Train travel was not cheap! From the pamphlet,

Mantyuotoarr| 9 46| 3 30| 8 16| ... |mantyuotodep|6 a10|11 a5| 5p35| ...
Björneborgarr| 6 54|11 50| 6 20| ...

TABLE OF FARES on the RUSSIAN RAILWAYS.

For any distance up to 6 versts (4 miles) 27 kopecks, 1st class; 16 kopecks, 2nd class; 9 kopecks, 3rd class beyond 6 versts as under:—

Versts	Eng Mile	1 Cl	2 Cl	3 Cl	Versts	Eng Mile	1 Cl	2 Cl	3 Cl	Versts	Eng Mile	1 Cl	2 Cl	3 Cl	Versts	Eng Mile	1 Cl	2 Cl	3 Cl
		r. k.	r. k.	r. k.			r. k.	r. k.	r. k.			r. k.	r. k.	r. k.			r. k.	r. k.	r. k.
7	4½	0 28	0 17	0 11	30	20	1 13	0 68	0 45	53	35½	2 00	1 20	0 80	80	53	3 00	1 80	1 20
8	5½	0 30	0 18	0 12	31	20½	1 18	0 71	0 47	54	35½	2 03	1 22	0 81	90	59½	3 38	2 03	1 35
9	6	0 35	0 21	0 14	32	21½	1 20	0 72	0 48	55	36½	2 08	1 25	0 83	100	66½	3 75	2 25	1 50
10	6½	0 38	0 23	0 15	33	22	1 25	0 75	0 50	56	37	2 10	1 26	0 84	110	73	4 13	2 48	1 65
11	7½	0 43	0 26	0 17	34	22½	1 28	0 77	0 51	57	37½	2 15	1 29	0 86	120	79½	4 50	2 70	1 80
12	8	0 45	0 27	0 18	35	23½	1 33	0 80	0 53	58	38½	2 18	1 31	0 87	130	86½	4 88	2 93	1 95
13	8½	0 50	0 30	0 20	36	23½	1 35	0 81	0 54	59	39	2 23	1 34	0 89	140	92½	5 25	3 15	2 10
14	9½	0 53	0 32	0 21	37	24½	1 40	0 84	0 56	60	39½	2 25	1 35	0 90	150	99½	5 63	3 38	2 25
15	10	0 58	0 35	0 23	38	25½	1 43	0 86	0 57	61	40½	2 30	1 38	0 92	160	106	6 00	3 60	2 40
16	10½	0 60	0 36	0 24	39	25½	1 48	0 89	0 59	62	41	2 33	1 40	0 93	170	112½	6 25	3 75	2 50
17	11½	0 65	0 39	0 26	40	26½	1 50	0 90	0 60	63	41½	2 38	1 43	0 95	180	119½	6 50	3 90	2 60
18	12	0 68	0 41	0 27	41	27½	1 55	0 93	0 62	64	42½	2 40	1 44	0 96	190	126	6 75	4 05	2 70
19	12½	0 73	0 44	0 29	42	27½	1 58	0 95	0 63	65	43	2 45	1 47	0 98	200	132½	7 00	4 20	2 80
20	13½	0 75	0 45	0 30	43	28½	1 63	0 98	0 65	66	43½	2 48	1 49	0 99	210	139½	7 25	4 35	2 90
21	14	0 80	0 48	0 32	44	29½	1 65	0 99	0 66	67	44½	2 53	1 52	1 01	220	145½	7 50	4 50	3 00
22	14½	0 83	0 50	0 33	45	29½	1 70	1 02	0 68	68	45	2 55	1 53	1 02	230	152½	7 75	4 65	3 10
23	15½	0 88	0 53	0 35	46	30½	1 73	1 04	0 69	69	45½	2 60	1 56	1 04	240	159	8 00	4 80	3 20
24	16	0 90	0 54	0 36	47	31½	1 78	1 07	0 71	70	46½	2 63	1 58	1 05	250	165½	8 25	4 95	3 30
25	16½	0 95	0 57	0 38	48	31½	1 80	1 08	0 72	71	47	2 68	1 61	1 07	260	172½	8 50	5 10	3 40
26	17½	0 98	0 59	0 39	49	32½	1 85	1 11	0 74	72	47½	2 70	1 62	1 08	270	179	8 75	5 25	3 50
27	18	1 03	0 62	0 41	50	33½	1 88	1 13	0 75	73	48½	2 75	1 65	1 10	280	185½	9 00	5 40	3 60
28	18½	1 05	0 63	0 42	51	33½	1 93	1 16	0 77	74	49	2 78	1 67	1 11	290	192½	9 25	5 55	3 70
29	19½	1 10	0 66	0 44	52	34½	1 95	1 17	0 78	75	49½	2 83	1 70	1 13	300	198½	9 50	5 70	3 80

<p>From 301 versts to 400 versts there are 4 zones of 25 versts each.</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr><td>" 401 "</td><td>" 500 "</td><td>" "</td><td>" 4 "</td><td>" 25 "</td></tr> <tr><td>" 501 "</td><td>" 710 "</td><td>" "</td><td>" 7 "</td><td>" 30 "</td></tr> <tr><td>" 711 "</td><td>" 990 "</td><td>" "</td><td>" 8 "</td><td>" 35 "</td></tr> <tr><td>" 991 "</td><td>" 1510 "</td><td>" "</td><td>" 13 "</td><td>" 40 "</td></tr> <tr><td>" 1511 "</td><td>" 2860 "</td><td>" "</td><td>" 30 "</td><td>" 45 "</td></tr> <tr><td>" 2861 "</td><td>" 3010 "</td><td>" "</td><td>" 3 "</td><td>" 50 "</td></tr> <tr><td>" 3011 "</td><td>" 9030 "</td><td>" "</td><td>" 86 "</td><td>" 70 "</td></tr> </table>	" 401 "	" 500 "	" "	" 4 "	" 25 "	" 501 "	" 710 "	" "	" 7 "	" 30 "	" 711 "	" 990 "	" "	" 8 "	" 35 "	" 991 "	" 1510 "	" "	" 13 "	" 40 "	" 1511 "	" 2860 "	" "	" 30 "	" 45 "	" 2861 "	" 3010 "	" "	" 3 "	" 50 "	" 3011 "	" 9030 "	" "	" 86 "	" 70 "	<p>For each zone, irrespective of length, the charge is the same—65 kopecks, 1st class; 40 kopecks, 2nd class; 25 kopecks, 3rd class.</p> <p>With charge for each zone of 50 kopecks, 1st class; 30 kopecks, 2nd class; 20 kopecks, 3rd class.</p> <p>With charge for each zone of 1 rouble 1st class; 60 kopecks, 2nd class; 40 kopecks, 3rd class.</p>
" 401 "	" 500 "	" "	" 4 "	" 25 "																																
" 501 "	" 710 "	" "	" 7 "	" 30 "																																
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" 1511 "	" 2860 "	" "	" 30 "	" 45 "																																
" 2861 "	" 3010 "	" "	" 3 "	" 50 "																																
" 3011 "	" 9030 "	" "	" 86 "	" 70 "																																

There are a few express trains for which it is necessary to pay a small supplementary fare. The length of time for which tickets are available varies according to distance; validity is reckoned from midnight of day of issue; the passenger may break his journey anywhere and as often as he wishes provided the whole journey be completed within the time specified on the ticket; the ticket must be presented at the booking offices to be stamped.

Up to 200 versts, valid 1 day.	801 to 1100 versts, valid 4 days.
201 — 500 " " 2 days.	1101 — 1500 " " 5 "
501 — 800 " " 3 "	1501 — 1900 " " 6 "
	1901 — 2300 " " 7 "
And 1 day extra for every additional 400 versts.	" " "

Luggage is charged according to distance.

¹⁷ JewishGen LehilaLinks, Wages and Buying Power, 1895 – 1905, <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/lida-district/wages.htm>

¹⁸ Money Exchange, 1904 RUB to USD <https://moneyexchangerate.org/currencyexchange/rub/USD/1904>

¹⁹ CPI Inflation Calculator <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1904?amount=50>

we can also see that the girls could buy one through ticket which included the transfer stop. Note they charged separately for luggage. We do not know if they had separate luggage, though.

The third-class car consisted of hard, wooden benches. The girls sat on these benches the entire day. They had to stay awake to make sure other travelers did not steal their belongings. They most likely ate the food that their mother packed for them.

Although they would have checked the time schedule before arriving at the station, they probably watched the clock carefully for the departure time. Below are the schedules for 1888 and 1913. From looking at the schedules, you can determine that it was not a direct trip to Libau in 1904. They had to transfer to a different train in Moscheiki.

Going by the 1888 schedule below, we can see that the train left the Mitau station at 11:20 am and arrived at the Moscheiki station at 6:00 pm. It then left Moscheiki at 8:20 pm and finally arrived in Libau at 11 pm. The girls, therefore, travelled by train for almost 12 hours. It was certainly a long, exhausting, and emotional day for them.

It is about 110 miles from Mitau to Libau. Today, it would take about 2 hours and 14 minutes to drive there²⁰. Today, the train is direct. The tickets cost between \$5 to \$8, and the trip takes about 2 ½ hours, but, the trains only run twice a week.²¹ However, as we saw, this was not the case in 1904.

LIBAU and WILNA. (Petersburg Time.)									
Dist.	r.	k.	r.	k.	r.	k.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.
53½	3	23	2	43	1	24	3 25	10 10	9 23
110	6	64	4	99	2	55	7 42	1a 19	11 15
182½	11	3	8	28	4	23	1a 44	...	12p15
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4 p50
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7 55
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	8 20
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	11 10

WILNA, WILEISKAJA, BACHMATSCH, and ROMNEY. (Petersburg Time.)									
Dist.	1	Cl.	2	Cl.	3	Cl.	p.m.	a.m.	a.m.
107½	6	49	4	86	2	48	1 33	12 41	7 25
194½	11	74	8	80	4	50	2 55	1 15	10 55
282½	17	6	12	80	6	54	8 p32	7 a22	6 a30
396½	23	96	17	98	9	19	12a20	...	12p20
441	26	66	20	6	10	22	4a 52	...	4 p39
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	9a 45	...	8 p48
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4 p30	a.m.	4 0
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7 p0	6 25	9 50
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	9 p25	9 35	10 25

RADZIWIŁISCHKI and KALKUHNEN.									
Dist.	r.	k.	r.	k.	r.	k.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.
27	1	65	1	25	0	64	6 35	...	9 20
62	3	60	2	71	1	39	124	6 98	5 24
93	4	99	3	75	1	92	124	6 98	5 24

RIGA, MITAU, & MOSCHEIKI.—Mitau Railway—Office, Riga. [Local Time.]									
Dist.	r.	k.	r.	k.	r.	k.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.
27	1	65	1	25	0	64	10 10	1 40	7 55
62	3	60	2	71	1	39	11 20	2 51	9 5
93	4	99	3	75	1	92	4 52	10 57	...

²⁰ Directions from Jelgava to Libau, Google Maps <https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Jelgava,+Latvia/Liep%C4%81ja,+Latvia/@56.5738303,21.2658686,8z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x46ef254b6eed168f:0x400cfd68f31c60!2m2!1d23.7196411!2d56.6511478!1m5!1m1!1s0x46faa7d278ba642d:0x400cfd68f2fe80!2m2!1d21.0538204!2d56.5384577!3e0>

²¹ Train travel in Latvia in 2023 <https://www.rome2rio.com/map/Jelgava/Liep%C4%81ja#/Train/s/0>

1888 Train Schedule²² (above) and 1913 Train Schedule (below)²³

317		Russian Railways.		For FARES see p. 312A.	
RIGA and TUKUMI.					
E.M.	Riga	dep	8 a 12 0 4 p 25 11 55	Tukum	dep 5 a 42 11 a 15 2 p 50 8 p 35
14	Malorengof	9 3 12 58 5 26 12 54		Kemern	6 18 11 50 3 33 9 9
27	Kemern	9 47 1 45 6 16 1 44		Malorengof	7 10 12 37 4 32 9 56
39	Tukum	arr 10 20 2 20 6 50 2 20		Riga (317) arr	8 10 1 30 5 30 10 49
RIGA and MOSCHEIKI.					
Dist.	Riga	dep	9 31 3 36 8 50	Moscheikidop	4 45 2 16 7 35
E.M.	Mitau	10 38 4 52 10 10		Autz	5 59 3 26 8 35
27	Autz	12 17 6 30 12 9		Mitau	7 40 4 58 9 59
81	Moscheiklarr	1 10 7 25 1 15		Riga (317) arr	8 51 6 0 11 0
80					
RIGA and OREL.					
		1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3
Riga	dep	10 16 6 5 7 10 8 10 11 55	Orel	dep	11 15 4 55 11 34
Stockmannshof ..	1 12 8 12 9 50 10 57 2 34		Karatschew	1 30 7 21 1 58	
Kreuzburg 317 ..	1 42 8 37 10 10 11 29 3 4		Briansk 314	2 50 8 38 3 55	
Dvinsk 313	arr 3 26 10 8 1 23 4 55		Shukovka	4 14 10 10 5 45	
	dep 4 0 11 0		Roslavl	6 19 12 22 8 22	
Kroslawka	5 11 12 6		Potschnok	7 45 1 48 10 6	
Orisa	6 32 1 17		Smolensk 315arr	9 p 10 3 a 12 11 a 30	
Polozk	8 20 2 42			9 p 53 3 a 32 12 p 20	
Srotino	10 12 3 54		Rudnja	11 47 5 17 2 43	
Vitebsk	arr 11 p 30 4 a 44		Vitebsk	arr 1 a 24 6 a 55 4 p 40	
	dep 12 a 19 4 a 59		314	arr 1 a 54 7 a 20 5 p 34	
Rudnja	dep 2 7 6 32		Srotino	3 2 8 34 6 59	
Smolensk	arr 3 a 13 7 a 57		Polozk	4 24 10 12 8 48	
	dep 4 a 3 8 a 47		Orisa	5 51 11 49 10 27	
Potschnok	5 39 10 11		Roslavl	7 10 1 15 11 57	
Roslavl	7 23 11 42		Dvinsk	arr 8 a 5 2 p 15 1 a 0	
Shukovka	9 23 1 31		313	dep 5 35 8 a 55 3 p 23 1 a 20	
Briansk	11 12 3 25		Kreuzburg	7 52 10 38 5 39 3 47 5 a 35	
Karatschew	12 22 4 34		Stockmannshof ..	8 19 11 0 6 7 4 13 6 0	
Orel 318, 322	arr 2 p 35 6 p 45		Riga	arr 11 a 5 1 p 5 8 p 50 7 a 0 8 40	
STOCKMANNSHOF and VALK.					
Dist.	Stockmannshof	dep	7 a 0 1 p 55	Valk	dep 6 a 10 4 p 40
E.M.	Marienburg	2 p 50 6 a 58		Marienburg	10 a 30 9 p 5
57	Valk	arr 7 p 34 11 a 15		Stockmannshofarr	5 p 34 10 a 30
LIBAU and VILNA.					
Dist.	Libau	dep	11 15 5 5 11 50	Vilna	dep 6 2 12 54 7 15
E.M.	Moscheiki	arr 1 52 7 35 2 31		Landwarowo	6 25 1 18 7 41
105	Schau	dep 2 13 8 18 2 45		Koschedarl	arr 7 24 2 15 8 44
117	Radziwilschklarr	4 21 10 22 4 42			dep 7 42 2 30 9 6
	dep 4 50 10 50 5 8		Keidan	9 7 3 56 10 39	
158	Keidan	5 40 11 2 5 24		Radziwilschklarr	10 34 5 20 12 9
	dep 9 3 2 10 8 40		Schau	dep 10 44 5 39 12 21	
196	Koschedarl	7 32 12 39 7 0		Moscheiki	arr 11 16 6 2 12 56
226	Landwarowo	10 46 4 54 10 8			dep 12 55 7 43 2 42
237	Vilna (312) arr	1 p 19 5 a 20 10 a 32		Libau	arr 1 25 8 10 3 25
					dep 3 p 40 10 p 52 6 a 30
RADZIWILSCHKI					
Dist.	Radziwilschki	dep	11 15 5 5 11 50		
E.M.					
57					
105					
117					
158					
196					
226					
237					



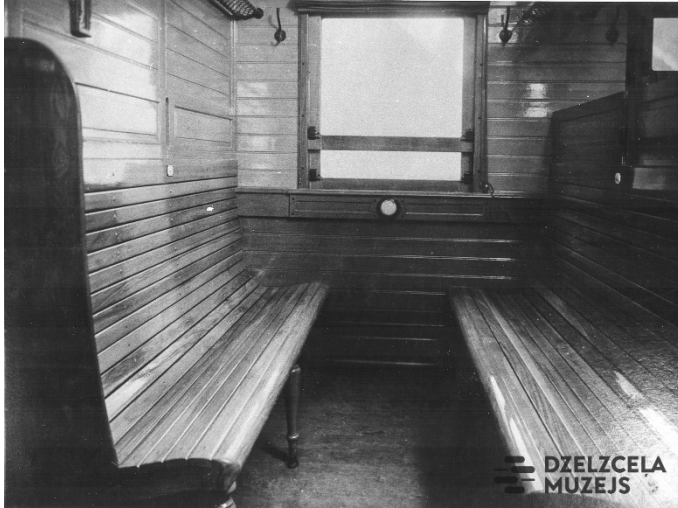
Had the girls ever been on a train before? Had they ever been inside of the train station? How did they feel buying the train tickets to start the first leg of their adventure? What did they think of the big, noisy, smoking machine barreling quickly down the track before stopping to let passengers on and off?

²² Bradshaw's Continental Rail Guide September, 1888, by Bradshaw and Blacklock <https://archive.org/details/BradshawsContinentalRailGuideSeptember1888/page/288/mode/2up?q=Mitau>

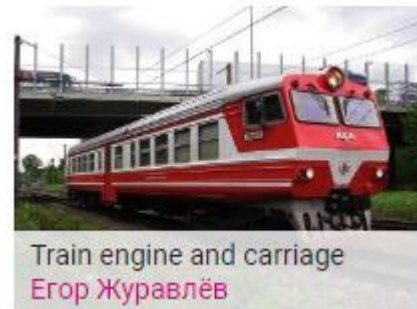
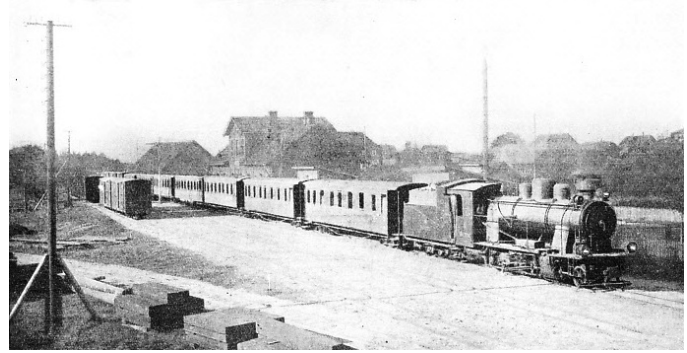
²³ Bradshaw's Continental Rail Guide September, 1913, by Bradshaw and Blacklock, from a private collection of participant in the JewishGen.org Immigration Research Class, February 2023

Above is a picture of a train circa 1900 in Latvia²⁴. Here is a better example of a Latvian wood-burning locomotive.²⁵

It does not look too comfortable to me!



3rd class benches²⁶



In contrast, here is a picture of a Latvian train today.

Libau

The girls arrived in Libau late at night after a long day of travelling. Did Feige, and/or her family, meet the girls at the train station, or did they send a horse and cart to get them, or could they walk to Feige's house? Had they been there before? Was it safe to be at the train station alone in the dark for two young girls?

²⁴ Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=168081>

²⁵ Railway Wonders of the World, The State Lines of Latvia, <https://www.railwaywondersoftheworld.com/latvia.html>

²⁶ Dzelzcela Muzejs <https://www.railwaymuseum.lv/lv/collection-online/foto-23-klases-pasazieriem-vagonu-solibu-veti-vairogs>, ID = LDzM 2046, picture from 1937 but I was told by the historian at the Jelgava Train Museum in an email dated 3/6/2023 that the trains would have looked the same in the early 1900's.

In case there were train delays along the train route, I assume they spent at least one night at Feige's house to avoid missing the ship that would take them to Copenhagen. The next day, the three girls would bid good-bye to Feige's family. They walked or took a horse and cart to the port area.

By 1900, Libau was a major Russian port on the Baltic Sea. It also became a popular resort and a major port for people headed to the United States or Canada. It wasn't until 1906 that you could go directly from Libau to the United States. So, for our travelers, it was a stop-over.²⁷

I imagine the port area bustled with activity. There would be a mixture of people, not only Jews. Different languages would be overheard. There were always scoundrels trying to take advantage of young girls travelling alone, and others trying to steal your money. There was excitement, but also fear and sadness in the air. People knew they were leaving their families and everything they knew behind, while others were anxious to reunite with family members who left before them.

Gendarmes could be bribed if you did not have your papers and medical inspections were not as rigorous as at other ports.²⁸ However, if people showed signs of disease when they got to New York or other final destinations, it was at the expense of the steamship company to return them to their homeland.

In addition to dealing with the crowds, the smells, and the different languages, the girls still had to locate the ticket office so they could board this first ship in Libau which they needed to get them to their steamship destination in Copenhagen.

There they would be sailing to the United States on the steamship *S.S. Island*.²⁹



²⁷ Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Liepāja <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liep%C4%81ja>

²⁸ The Port Jews of Libau, 1880–1914 NICHOLAS J. EVANS To cite this article: NICHOLAS J. EVANS (2004) The Port Jews of Libau, 1880–1914, Jewish Culture and History, 7:1-2, 197-214, DOI: 10.1080/1462169X.2004.10512018 To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1462169X.2004.10512018> The Port Jews of Libau, 1880–1914 NICHOLAS J. EVANS To cite this article: NICHOLAS J. EVANS (2004) The Port Jews of Libau, 1880–1914, Jewish Culture and History, 7:1-2, 197-214, DOI: 10.1080/1462169X.2004.10512018 To link to this article:

²⁹ Photo credit from website Defending History, Vol. XIV, Np. 4914, <https://defendinghistory.com/libau-a-place-by-the-sea/88391>

The S.S. *Island*

The steamship that would be waiting for them in Copenhagen was the *S.S. Island* which was built in 1882 at the Burmeister & Wain shipyard for the Thingvall Line. It weighed 2,844 tons gross and was designed to be a passenger and cargo ship. It was built to hold 50 first class passengers, 50 second class passengers, and 900 third class passengers.³⁰



In contrast to how their brother, Max, travelled over 10 years earlier, and in contrast to other steamship companies, there was no steerage. Instead, the third-class staterooms were considered spacious and well-ventilated. They had iron beds with springs, mattresses, sheets, pillows, and blankets. There were even washstands, mirrors, towels, soap, and water. The passengers were supplied with fresh water for drinking and the rooms were kept clean by stewards and stewardesses. The rooms could hold either 2, 4 or even 6 passengers enabling families to stay together.

Uniformed waiters served meals to tables in clean dining rooms. The tables would be set with clean linen and porcelain tableware. There was a variety to the menus, but the food was cooked in Scandinavian style. Did our ancestors enjoy trying a new cuisine, or did they stick to the food they brought with them from home?



There was also enough deck space for promenading and exercise. There were even Ladies' salons, smoking rooms, barber shops and bath facilities for our third-class travelers.

In case anyone got sick, there was a physician, nurse, drug dispensary, and well-equipped hospital on board. Cleanliness and courtesy were an important feature for all classes travelling on this line.

Women and children travelling alone were put in care of a special matron and stewardess. I assume this applied to Gussie, Sara, and Feige.³¹

As nice as this is made to sound, remember that the weather played an important role in how comfortable the journey would be and, there was always the fear of a shipwreck. That did occur. In

³⁰ Norway-Heritage, Hands Across the Sea, S/S *Island*, Scandinavian America Line
http://www.norwayheritage.com/p_ship.asp?sh=islao

³¹ From the website Norway-Heritage, Hands Across the Sea, The Scandinavian America Line
http://www.norwayheritage.com/p_shiplist.asp?co=scaal

addition, there were no ship stabilizers back then so imagine the rocking of the ship which could send people and objects flying about. Also, keep in mind that third-class was not at all as luxurious as first and second class.

Copenhagen – The First Departure Port

After arriving in Copenhagen from Libau, the girls had to find the ticket agent to purchase their tickets. We know they did this since their names appear in Copenhagen Police's Immigrant Protocols Database. By finding their names there, it means they bought a ticket directly from a Danish ticket agent for a trip from Copenhagen to New York.³²



Most likely they arrived at least one day in advance of the departure date. Therefore, they had to find a hostel to spend the night. Hotel Bethel (left corner of picture above) was a sailor's hostel but there must have been other ones within walking distance from the docks.³³

On Tuesday, August 30, 1904, the three girls boarded the *S.S. Island* located at the West Pier in "Frihavnen"³⁴. Before entering the gangplank for boarding, a policeman checked the passengers' papers. All emigrants had to show their contracts and tickets, and the contracts had to be signed in advance by a policeman. This was to ensure the tickets and contracts were legitimate and not purchased from a charlatan ticket agent in some other city. Those poor people were out of money and not allowed on the ship.



*Frihavnen in Copenhagen*³⁵

³² Copenhagen Police's Immigrant Protocols <http://www.udvandrarkivet.dk/udvandrerprotokollerne/>

³³ Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Hotel Bethel https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotel_Bethel

³⁴ From the website Norway-Heritage, Hands Across the Sea <http://www.norwayheritage.com/articles/templates/pictureofthemonth.asp?articleid=98&zoneid=13>

³⁵ Norway-Heritage Hands Across The Sea <http://www.norwayheritage.com/articles/templates/pictureofthemonth.asp?articleid=98&zoneid=13>

The girls then found the room that would be their home for the voyage. Finally, all passengers were on board and the ship started moving. Between the rocking of the ship and the smell of unwashed bodies and strange foods cooking, the girls, like most other passengers, were probably seasick for the first 24 hours, if not for most of the trip.

Intermediary Ports

The *S.S. Island* would make two stops to pick up more passengers. After travelling overnight, the first stop was at Kristiania (Oslo), the capital of Norway, where passengers would come on board from “Vippetangen”, which was just west of the “Akershus” castle.



*Emigrants ready to board at Vippetangen, Kristiania*³⁶

They then travelled down the Kristiania Fjord to the next stop at Kristiansand which had a narrow, difficult, and time-consuming harbor for the large steamships. Passengers were therefore



³⁶ Norway-Heritage Hands Across The Sea
<http://www.norwayheritage.com/articles/templates/pictureofthemonth.asp?articleid=98&zoneid=13>

brought to the *S.S. Island* by smaller steamships.³⁷ All this time the girls stayed onboard and watched the new passengers embark.

By Friday, September 2, 1904, the trek across the Atlantic began. They sailed north of Scotland to cross the ocean to New York.³⁸

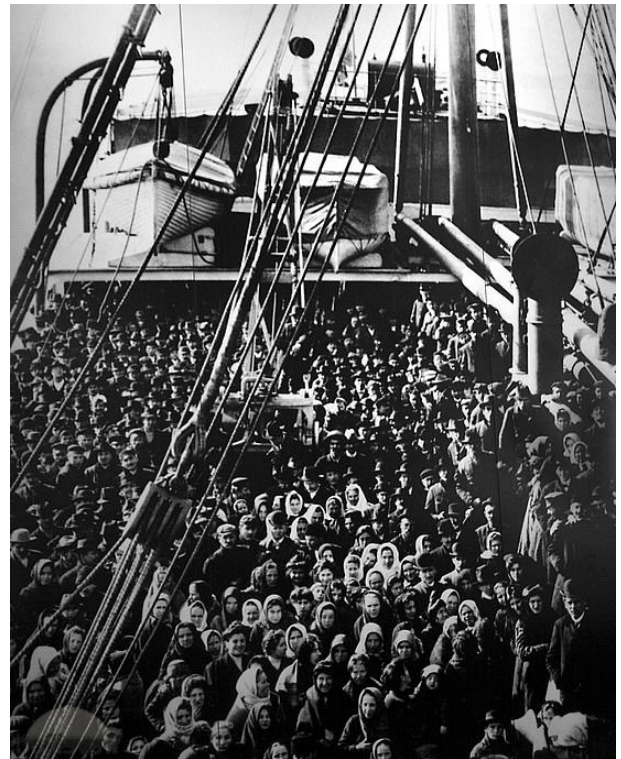
Besides the initial seasickness, the major problem aboard the steamship during this long journey was boredom. Think about it, without cell phones, tablets, and TV, what would you do to pass the time for the next 18 days? I guess you could probably write letters, pray, play cards, and walk on the promenade deck and make new friends. That is, if you were not seasick.

Arrival Port

Although people say they arrived at Ellis Island, the real location depended upon your steamship line. The Scandinavian-American Line docked at Hoboken, New Jersey. The weather was about the same as when the sisters began their journey as the average New York City temperature for that time of year was a high of 72 degrees to a low of 69 degrees³⁹.

However, their trip was not over. Third class passengers still had to go through the Ellis Island inspection station to make sure they were mentally and physically sound to enter the country. To get to Ellis Island, the girls exited the steamship at Hoboken and were herded onto a barge or ferry. Their legs must have been wobbly and their balance a little off after being on the steamship for 22 days.

The picture on the right shows the passengers waiting to debark and then find the barge or ferry that would shuttle them to Ellis Island.⁴⁰



³⁷ From the website Norway-Heritage, Hands Across the Sea <http://www.norwayheritage.com/articles/templates/pictureofthemoth.asp?articleid=98&zoneid=13>

³⁸ Norway-Heritage, Hands Across the Sea, The Scandinavian America Line http://www.norwayheritage.com/p_shiplist.asp?co=scaal

³⁹ New York City Weather in 1904 <https://www.extremeweatherwatch.com/cities/new-york/year-1904#september>

⁴⁰ Photo Credit from Save Ellis Island Website <https://saveellisland.org/about-us/blog/item/50-ellis-island%E2%80%99s-history.html>



Hoboken docks circa 1906 – although this is the area for the Hamburg American line, the Scandinavian American Line would look similar. ⁴¹

Ellis Island



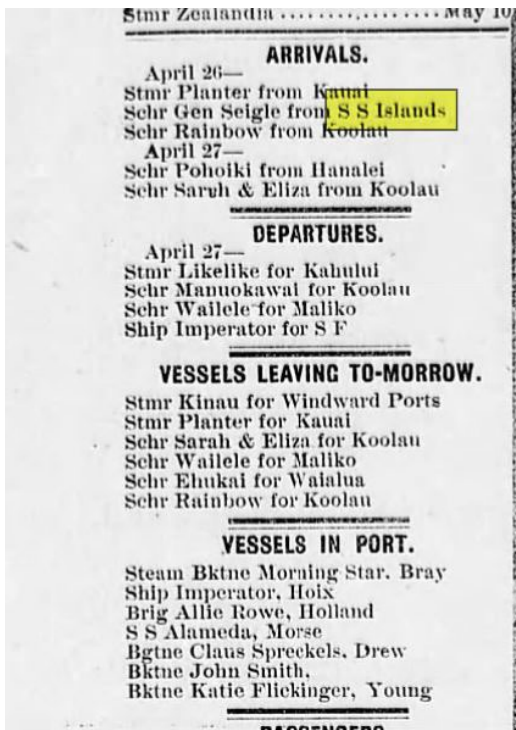
*Arriving at Ellis Island*⁴²

⁴¹ From the postcard collection of Maggie Land Blanck <http://www.maggieblanck.com/Hoboken/Piers.html>

⁴² Photo Credit from Save Ellis Island website: <https://saveellisland.org/about-us/blog/item/50-ellis-island%E2%80%99s-history.html>

Once at Ellis Island, the steerage and third-class passengers underwent medical and legal inspections in the Great Hall (the Registry Room). You would not be let into the country if you were found to have a contagious disease, especially the eye disease trachoma, or if the inspectors felt you could not support yourself.⁴³

The inspection process took three to five hours.⁴⁴ Remember that, at this time, the girls could not speak English. Did they understand what was happening to them?



Although the three girls passed the inspections, they were all detained, awaiting the arrival of their brothers. Max arrived first. However, Gussie and Sarah did eat one meal at the detention center while waiting for him. They were probably served a banana and white bread, neither of which the girls had ever seen before.⁴⁵ The detention center kept track of meals served in order to charge the steamship companies for them. They bid good-bye to Feige who was waiting for her brother, Chaim Pearl, who was coming from Boston. Feige ate two meals at the detention center.⁴⁶

Max and Chaim would have checked local newspapers for the arrival date and time of the steamship, *S.S. Island*. Local papers published daily the lists of ships arriving and departing.

Note: S.S. Islands in the newspaper clipping to the left refers to South Sea Islands, not the ship the girls came on. This is just an example of what appeared in local newspapers.

The above is an example from a local Hawaiian paper, but I am sure the New York ones would be similar.⁴⁷

⁴³ Photo Credit from Save Ellis Island website: <https://saveellisland.org/about-us/blog/item/50-ellis-island%E2%80%99s-history.html>

⁴⁴ Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island Website <https://www.statueofliberty.org/ellis-island/overview-history/>

⁴⁵ Smithsonian Magazine, The Foods that Passed Through Ellis Island, January 6, 2010, Lisa Bramen <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-foods-that-passed-through-ellis-island-76907163/>

⁴⁶ Detained Passenger Page of Ship Manifest, Year: 1904; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: T715, 1897-1957; Microfilm Roll: Roll 0496; Line: 21; Page Number: 36. published by Ancestry.com in New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957

⁴⁷ Evening Bulletin - 27 Apr 1885, Mon - Page 3 - (Honolulu, Hawaii), <https://www.newspapers.com/image/467120467/?terms=%22S.S.%20Island%22&match=1>

Here are other examples of newspaper listings for the arrival and departing of steamships, mail, and additional steamship news.⁴⁸

STEAMERS' SCHEDULE		
To Depart From Philadelphia		
Name.	For.	Sails.
†Masconomo	Rotterdam	Apr. 2
Switzerland	Antwerp	Apr. 4
†Assyria	Hamburg	Apr. 5
†Matic Merchant	Manchester	Apr. 6
†Montana	London	Apr. 6
†Eagle Point	London	Apr. 8
†Bolivia	Hamburg	Apr. 8
†Canada	Rotterdam	Apr. 9
†Norrdland	Liverpool	Apr. 9
†Rhylaud	Antwerp	Apr. 13
†Crown Point	Liverpool	Apr. 15
†Merion	Liverpool	Apr. 16
†North Point	London	Apr. 23
†Westernland	Liverpool	Apr. 23
†Pennmanor	Rotterdam	Apr. 23
†Minnesota	London	Apr. 25
To Arrive at Philadelphia		
Name.	From.	Sailed.
DUE MARCH 30.		
†Buenos Ayren	Glasgow	Mar. 10
†Assyria	Hamburg	Mar. 13
Switzerland	Antwerp	Mar. 15
†Montana	Swansea	Mar. 17
To Depart From New York		
Name.	For.	Sails.
Majestic	Liverpool	Mar. 30
La Gascogne	Havre	Mar. 31
Moltke	Hamburg	Mar. 31
Laurentian	Glasgow	Mar. 31
Barbarossa	Bremen	Mar. 31
P. Irene	Naples, Genoa	Apr. 2
St. Louis	Southampton	Apr. 2
Finland	Antwerp	Apr. 2
Pennsylvania	Antwerp	Apr. 2
Etruria	Liverpool	Apr. 2
Minnetonka	London	Apr. 2
Columbia	Glasgow	Apr. 2
Paistia	Naples, Genoa	Apr. 4
Citta di Napoli	Naples, Genoa	Apr. 5
Potsdam	Rotterdam	Apr. 5
Oceanic	Liverpool	Apr. 6
P. Alice	Bremen	Apr. 7
Deutschland	Hamburg	Apr. 7
La Touraine	Havre	Apr. 9
L'Aquitaine	Havre	Apr. 9
Patricia	Hamburg	Apr. 9
Vaderland	Antwerp	Apr. 9
Marquette	London	Apr. 9
Lacania	Liverpool	Apr. 9
K. Albert	Naples, Genoa	Apr. 9
To Arrive at New York		
Name.	From.	Sailed.
DUE MARCH 30.		
Finland	Antwerp	Mar. 19
Armenian	Liverpool	Mar. 19
Potsdam	Rotterdam	Mar. 19
Princess Irene	Gibraltar	Mar. 21
Oceanic	Liverpool	Mar. 23
DUE MARCH 31.		
Sloterdijk	Rotterdam	Mar. 18
Patricia	Plymouth	Mar. 21
Princess Alice	Bremen	Mar. 22
Deutschland	Cherbourg	Mar. 25
DUE APRIL 1.		
United States	Christiansand	Mar. 22
Citta Di Napoli	Naples	Mar. 18
Princess Alice	Cherbourg	Mar. 23
†Do not carry passengers. For mail steamers see "Foreign Mails."		

FOREIGN MAILS

Closing at Philadelphia Postoffice for Week Ending April 2

WEDNESDAY—For Bahamas (except parcels post), per **steamer** from Miami, Fla. 10.30 A M; for Europe, per S S Majestic, via Queenstown, 2 A M; for Italy, per S S Citta di Milano (when specially addressed), 4 A M; for Belgium, per S S Switzerland, via Antwerp (when specially addressed), 7 A M.

THURSDAY—For France, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Egypt, Greece and British India, per S S La Gascogne, via Havre (other parts of Europe, when specially addressed), 1 A M; for Cuba, per S S Monterey (Mexico, via Progreso, Campeche and Vera Cruz, when specially addressed), 4 A M; for Mayaguez (ordinary mail only) per S S Mae (ordinary mail for other parts of Porto Rico, when specially addressed), 4 A M.

FRIDAY—For Bahamas, per S S Orizaba (Guantanamo and Santiago, when specially addressed), 7.30 A M; for Jamaica, per **steamer** from Boston, 6 P M; for Ireland, per S S Efruria, via Queenstown (other parts of Europe when specially addressed), 9 A M.

SATURDAY—For Europe, per S S St Louis, via Plymouth and Cherbourg, 1 A M; for Scotland, per S S Columbia (when specially ad-

CHANGE OF STEAMER SCHEDULES.—Boston, Mass., March 28.—**Steamer** Admiral Farragut, which sailed Saturday for Port Antonio and Port Limon and returned yesterday morning, had hinge of one of the pumps in engine room broken Saturday night and struck the port side with such force as to crack a plate below the water line, which caused a leak, but the pumps controlled it. Captain decided to return to make repairs, and 18 passengers left for Philadelphia to go on **steamer** Admiral Schley. The others leave Saturday on **steamer** Admiral Farragut. She dry docks to-morrow. Her sailing from Jamaica will be taken by the Schley, which has been running to Philadelphia for the winter, and the Farragut will take the Schley's **schedule** from West Indies.

PASSED DERELICT AND WRECKAGE.—Nassau, March 22.—**Steamer** Saratoga, which arrived from New York to-day, reports March 19 passed through a quantity of sawed hard pine lumber, mostly small boards. Same date 9 P M, Diamond Shoal Lightship, S W by W, 7 miles, passed a waterlogged vessel at anchor, showing two riding lights; unable to make out her rig.

NEW YORK TO BE REPAIRED.—Southampton, March 29.—The American Line **steamer** New York, from New York, which arrived at Southampton after grounding off Cape La Hague, France, and later was in collision in the British Channel with the British troop ship Assaye, proceeded to-day for Belfast to effect repairs.

⁴⁸ The Philadelphia Inquirer, 30 Mar 1904 Wed, Page6, published at Newspapers.com <https://www.newspapers.com/image/168431704/?terms=Steamers%20Schedule&match=1>

Final Destination City

From Ellis Island they had to get to Max's apartment. They had to wait for Max to arrive so they could leave the detention area. Would they recognize their brother? Would he recognize his sisters? They hadn't seen each other for more than 12 years. Maybe Sam came along with Max. Sam had emigrated only six months before his sisters did and would surely recognize them. To help them while they waited, there were volunteers from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society who could explain to them in Yiddish what was happening.⁴⁹

Once reunited, they had to get the ferry at Ellis Island to take them to Lower Manhattan where the ferry docked at Battery Park, Pier A. It was a relatively short ferry ride. Today it would take about 25 minutes.⁵⁰ From there it was about a two and one half mile walk to Chrystie Street where their brother, Max, was living in a tenement with their brother, Sam, who had emigrated before them.



Pier A between 1909 – 1904, Lower Manhattan, within Battery Park⁵¹

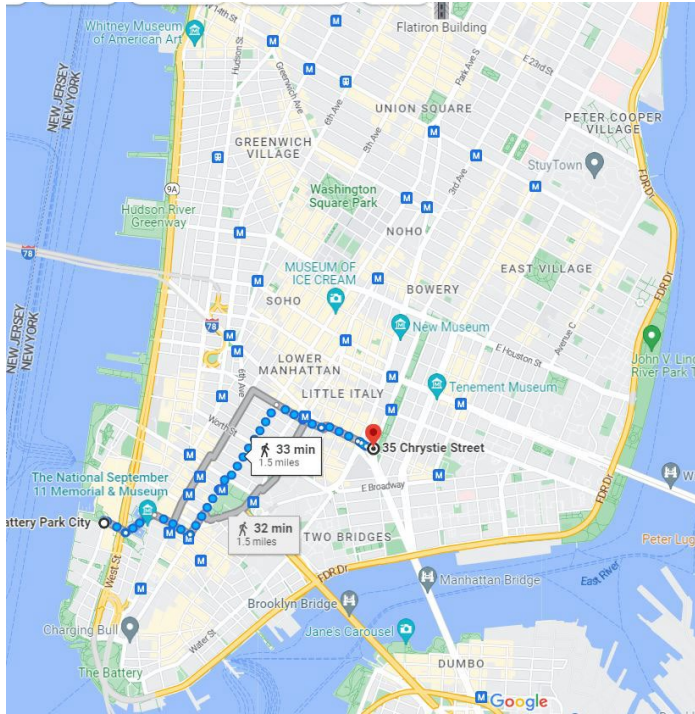
Feige and Chaim would have taken a barge to New Jersey to a train station where they could catch the train back to Boston.⁵²

⁴⁹ Naples Daily News, June 30, 2009, Doris Reynolds, Let's Talk Food: Independence and the Ellis Island Cookbook <https://archive.naplesnews.com/columnists/lifestyle/doris-reynolds/lets-talk-food-independence-and-the-ellis-island-cookbook-ep-397653081-331761691.html>

⁵⁰ The website Battery Park to Ellis Island <https://www.rome2rio.com/s/Battery-Park/Ellis-Island>

⁵¹ The HMdb.org, The Historical Marker Database, Pier A, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=114673>

⁵² Naples Daily News, June 30, 2009, Doris Reynolds, Let's Talk Food: Independence and the Ellis Island Cookbook <https://archive.naplesnews.com/columnists/lifestyle/doris-reynolds/lets-talk-food-independence-and-the-ellis-island-cookbook-ep-397653081-331761691.html>



This map shows a walking route from Battery Park to 35 Chrystie Street as seen on Google Maps today.

There is no more 34 Chrystie Street as the even number dwellings were razed to create a park.

To see what Broadway was like going from lower Broadway to mid-town in 1904, check out this amazing footage

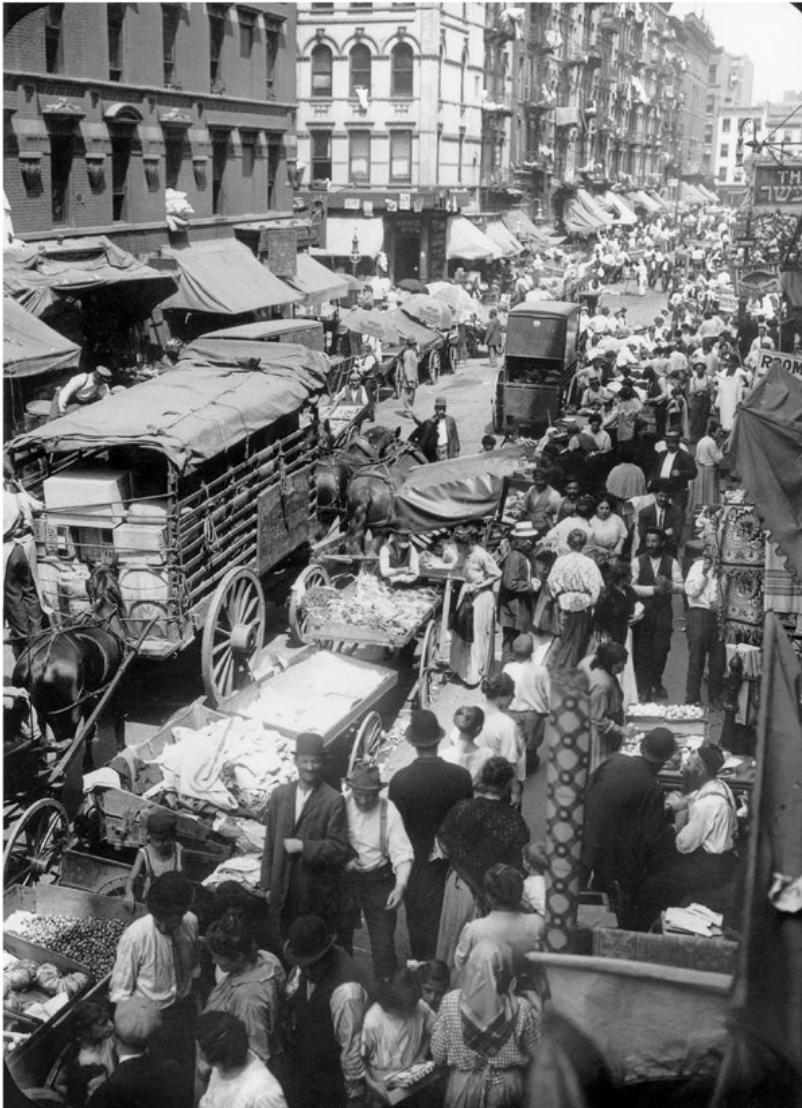
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRi3ZmEDP84>

Chrystie Street in the Lower East Side of Manhattan was the area where Russian Jews settled between the 1880s and 1920s. The streets in this area were: Hester Street, Allen Street, Forsyth, Eldridge, Chrystie, East Broadway, Division, Bayard, and Canal.⁵³ The arrow points to Chrystie Street.



By the time they got to Chrystie Street, they would have walked past pushcarts, streetcars, elevated trains, lots of children playing in the street, wash hanging out the windows and just throngs of people. I wonder what was going through their minds. How different was it from Mitau?

⁵³ Jewish Gen KehilaLinks, Lyakhovichi, Belarus, <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Lyakhovichi/immigration/lowereastside/index.html>



Hester Street, 1903

The apartments on Chrystie Street were considered tenements. Tenements were multi-family dwellings where the occupants were squeezed into small spaces. By 1900, over 2.3 million people lived in tenement housing, that equates to two-thirds of New York City's population.⁵⁴ Cold in the winter, hot in the summer, very little ventilation and light were found inside of the apartments. Usually only rooms facing the street got light, with no ventilation in the inside rooms. The hallways to the apartments were dark, too. It wasn't until 1901 that they were required to have light. It wasn't until 1904 that each apartment was required to have a private toilet. Before that, you could see people emptying their

⁵⁴ H – History.com, Tenements

<https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/tenements#:~:text=A%20typical%20tenement%20building%20had,a ccording%20to%20existing%20city%20regulations>

chamber pots out the windows. Since the girls arrived in 1904, did Max's apartment have an indoor toilet, or did they have to use chamber pots and outhouses?

Cooking was done by wood-burning or coal burning stoves. Grocery shopping was done daily as there was no way to keep food fresh. In the winter, you could store food on the fire escapes (however fire escapes were not required until the 1901 Tenement Act). In the summer, people would sleep on their fire escapes since the buildings got so hot with the little ventilation they had.

The main mode of transportation was by horse and cart. The horses were usually kept right in the neighborhood, so manure was all around. Mice and rats were rampant.

Given the living conditions, what did Samuel, Gussie and Sarah think of their new life? We don't know if they lived in the city or out in the country before emigrating, but in either case, just the staggering number of people in this new city must have been overwhelming at first.⁵⁵

By the 1905 New York State Census, they were all working. Sam was a peddler like his older brother, Max. The two sisters were working in the millenary trade. None of them returned home to Mitau, Latvia, so they must have acclimated in time.⁵⁶

New York, U.S., State Census, 1905 for Max Abramovitz											
New York > Manhattan > A.D. 08 E.D. 01											
1	Abramovitz, Max	Head	M	41	Russian	15	cit	Pedler	wa		
2	" " Gussie	Sister	F	23	Russian	8 3/4	al	Millinery	us		
3	" " Sarah	Sister	F	21	Russian	8 3/4	al	Miscellaneous	X		
4	" " Sam	Brother	M	26	Russian	13 3/4	al	Pedler	wa		

⁵⁵ There are many websites which explain tenement life in detail. There are also lots of pictures on these sites:

- New York City, Tenement Life by Maggie Blanck
<http://www.maggiéblanck.com/NewYork/Life.html>
- History.com, Tenements
<https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/tenements#:~:text=A%20typical%20tenement%20building%20had,according%20to%20existing%20city%20regulations>
- New York Public Library, Tenement Homes: The outsized Legacy of New York's Notoriously Cramped Apartments, <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2018/06/07/tenement-homes-new-york-history-cramped-apartments>
- 25 Haunting Photos of Life Inside New York's Tenements
<https://allthatsinteresting.com/tenement-new-york-photos-facts>
- Flashback, Everything Old is New Again, 23 Photographs of New York City in the 19th century
<https://flashbak.com/34-photographs-of-new-york-city-in-the-19th-century-11943/>
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⁵⁶ New York, State Census, 1905 New York State Archives; Albany, New York; State Population Census Schedules, 1905; Election District: A.D. 08 E.D. 01; City: Manhattan; County: New York; Page: 59, published by Ancestry.com, 2014

After arriving, Gussie (on left) and Sarah (on right) had their pictures taken. I imagine they sent copies home to show how well they were doing. Photographers often had extra clothes and props in their studios for their clients to borrow for their portrait session, or else people wore the best outfits they owned.



In Summary

Just how much did the total trip from Mitau to Manhattan cost per person? In 1904, it could have cost as much as 215 Russian Rubles. That would have been about \$277.35 per person. In 2023, that would be the equivalent to \$9,075.94 per person.⁵⁷ Below is a breakdown of the approximate costs:

Table 1: Average cost of emigration from the Pale of Settlement to the US for a single emigrant

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost (rubles)</i>
Passport or smuggler	12-15
Medical exam	1
Train fare	15 (adult); 7.5 (child)
Passage on the ship	75 (adult); 37.5 (child)
Food	4
Accommodations in the departure port	5
Money to show US authorities	100/(50)
Total	165-215

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Max worked as a peddler. The average American worker in 1900 earned about \$12.98 for 59 hours of work which equates to about \$674.96 a year. Out of that, Max still had to pay for rent, food, and other items. In 1900, rent on Chrystie Street for a three-room apartment was about \$12 - \$13 per month if you were on the first floor. The higher up you went in the building, the lower your rent became. On the 4th floor it might be about \$10 per month.⁵⁹ Once you subtract the rent from his earnings, you can see there is not much leftover for savings.

Max had to put away extra money for years in order to send for his siblings. Each sibling's passage to come to America represented about one-third of Max's yearly salary. In the two years between 1904 - 1905, he brought four siblings over.⁶⁰

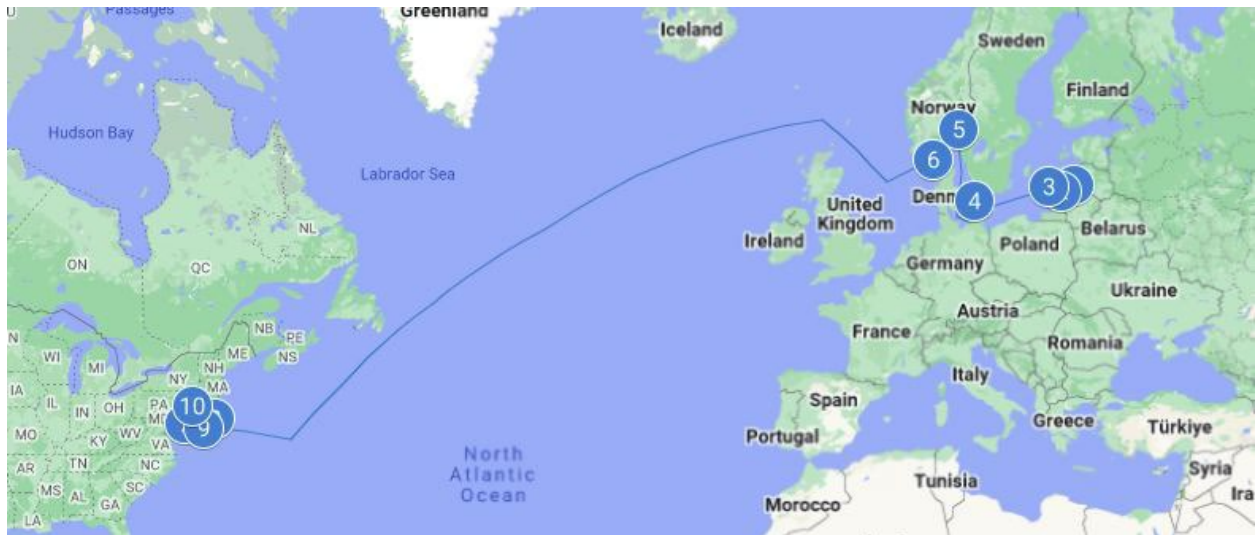
⁵⁷ Jewish Gen KehilaLinks: Wages and Buying Power, 1895 - 1905 <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/lida-district/wages.htm> and the CPI Inflation Calculator [tps://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1904?amount=270](https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1904?amount=270)

⁵⁸ Table from "Out of the Shtetl. In the footsteps of Eastern European Jewish emigrants to America, 1900-1914, by Gur Alroey <https://groups.jewishgen.org/g/ImmigrationStudyGroup/files/Articles/Out%20of%20the%20Shtetl.pdf>

⁵⁹ Tenement Museum, Blog Archive, "The Rent Is Due: A History of Rent at 97 Orchard Street", January 29, 2016, <https://www.tenement.org/blog/the-rent-is-due-a-history-of-rent-at-97-orchard-street/>

⁶⁰ Bizfluent, The History of American Income by Meryl Baer, <https://bizfluent.com/info-7769323-history-american-income.html>

When they arrived in the United States, Gussie's and Sarah's brother, Samuel, was already living with Max. Their brother, Abe, arrived about one year later. All their journeys to the United States were unique having travelled from Antwerp, Copenhagen or Hamburg, and on different steamships. I wonder if they all sat around and compared notes about their journeys? Just close your eyes and I bet you can imagine their conversations, in Yiddish, of course!



*By Tara Blieden Rothman
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