

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Byerazino/>

## My Grandparents and Berezin:

### Zeldovich-Grossman & Gurevich-Astrakhan

by Emily Sper



#### My Grandfather's Family Coming to America — Zeldovich & Grossman

My great grandfather Abraham Zeldovich/Seldovich/Seldovitz changed his name to Heringman. I was told changing the family name was connected to escaping the Russian draft. He was the only sibling of six (Esther, Chayim, Joshua, Michla, Roda) to change his name.

One descendant changed his name to Herman (Harry) and another to Harriman (Ben). In 1904, Abraham's son Shmuel Aryah was the first to emigrate and settle in Rochester, NY. He died of cancer in 1905. My grandmother said he didn't like America and returned to Russia, but we don't know for sure. In 1906, Nechemia (Hyman) and Ore (Isadore) followed.





<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Byerazino/>

In 1908, my grandfather David came with my grandmother Sonia née Gurevich, passing through Ellis Island as sister and brother. I'm not sure when Abraham's daughter, Bayla, arrived and settled in Ohio.

In 1912, Abraham and his wife, Yente Grossman Zeldovich, came, bringing Ben, the son of Shmul Aryah. At least two of Abraham's siblings, Esther and Yehoshua (Joshua), also settled in Rochester. I see an Itzy and an Orzig Seldovitz in the passenger records arriving in 1906 from Berezin, but don't know who they were or where they settled. Neither Abraham's parents, David and Bella Zeldovich (née Simkovich) nor Yente's parents, Menucha and Shmuel Aryah Grossman came to America.

### **My Grandmother's Life and Family in Berezin — Astrakhan & Gurevich**

Like many families of the time, Sonia's father, Zvi Hirsch Gurevich, married three times. Sonia's mother, Elka née Astrakhan, was his second wife. Elka married Zvi Hirsch when her older sister, his first wife, died. There were four siblings from the first wife: Mara, Motte, Sholem, and Freyda. There may have been another sister who was trampled to death by a Cossack riding his horse down the road.

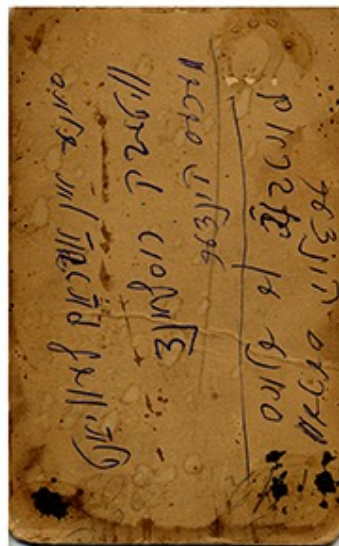
Sonia's family lived at the family's turpentine factory. She told my mother that she slept on the stove. Around the house she wore *lopjes*, rags, around her feet. She would run away barefoot to play with the Russian peasant children. She wasn't allowed to take sewing lessons, but found a way to take them without getting caught. And though she didn't go to school, a friend who did taught her everything she learned. My grandmother knew how to swim the dog paddle because as a girl her family went to the Black Sea.

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Byerazino/>

Mara owned a corset shop in Vitebsk (getting her stock in Vilna) and her husband, Boris Leviant, was a scholar. Sonia worked in the shop. She was closer in age to Mara's daughter, also named Sonia, than her sister. We have photos of Mara's family: Sonia (Yaroslavl), Ega (Tashkent), Abrasha (Moscow), and a son who was "eliminated" in 1936 while working in the Kremlin. When Mara died, her daughter Sonia wrote my grandmother and asked her to write to Mara's address. My grandmother was superstitious and wouldn't write to her there so they lost touch.







I'm not sure how old my grandmother was when she saw her mother, Elka, fall from the window of a barn. Zvi Hirsch married a third time and neither Sonia nor Blume liked their stepmother. I suspect this made leaving for America easier. In 1907 or 1908, my grandmother's sister Blume arrived in Rochester with her husband, Isidore Tantelevich (shortened to Levitz). I'm not sure if this was before or after my grandparents' arrival in 1908, or even with them.



<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Byerazino/>

Sonia and Blume had one full brother, Sholem Chaim, who didn't come to America. The wealthy owner of turpentine factory, he was killed by the Czar. His wife, Manya (sister of first wife), and son, Boris (named after Mara's husband) came to Rochester by way of Montreal.

Sonia's brother Motte lived in Ashipovitz and Sholem lived in Human. When I moved to Israel in 1980, she gave me their names, hoping I'd find them.

Elka had a brother Moshe Astrakhan who lived in Retsitsta or Hamal, and later in Moscow. Her parents were Mendel and, possibly, Blume Astrakhan. The parents of Zvi Hirsch were Lazar Gurevich and his wife's name we don't know.

Freyda tried to come to America, but wasn't allowed to disembark in NY. Sonia thought the boat was continuing on to South America, but there was no further communication once the ship left.

Sonia brought postcards with her (see 'Postcards Collected by Sonia Gurevich Heringman' in the Pictures section of this KehilaLink), which she gave to me. The postcards offer a glimpse into the life of a young Jewish woman in Berezin and America. She was 19 years old when she emigrated. In Rochester, where she found work, sewing buttonholes in the garment industry, she became active as a union organizer. Among the American postcards is one that memorializes her friend and fellow-organizer, Ida Brayman, who was killed by an employer.