

Half the Jewish community of Ioannina would immigrate to the USA from 1902-1924. They came seeking a better life for themselves and their children. Initially, most settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The Jenny family was typical of this immigration.

Leon (Judah) Jenny came to the USA from Greece in 1910 on the Martha Washington, leaving Patras on August 8, 1910 and arriving at Ellis Island on August 21st. He is listed as a 17 year old single farm laborer and was travelling with his mother, Stamoula, and his sister, Esther. He would meet his future wife, Katie Abolafia, a Sephardic Jew, in New York.



On the ship manifest, Stamoula is carrying \$60 (\$20 for her and \$20 for each of her children (Leon and Esther). The manifest states that she is going to her son and while Jim (Haim) had come over in 1906, the name listed is "Barouch Matza," an obvious mistake. Stamoula lists the closest

relative left behind in Ioannina as Haim Hadjopoulos. When Jim came over in 1906 he lists Avraam Naftali, a cousin, as his contact in the USA and Avraam is working at Schinasi Tobacco in Harlem.

We can see the growing modernization of the younger generation in their choice of names. Leon would rarely use his Hebrew name "Judah" and Hyman became known as "Jim."

Leon is listed as working for an optical firm in the 1915 census and 1942 draft card but in the 1940 census he was selling produce in the Bronx, working 75 hours a week, 52 weeks a year and making \$1400 a year (\$26 a week or 34 cents an hour). The monthly rent in 1940 is \$30. Both Leon and Katie only have an 8th grade education. Leon would work hard so that his children would have the benefits he did not have. After all, this is why they made the journey from Greece to the New World.

We learn from census data that, in 1920, Leon was living with his brother Jim (Hyman) in the Bronx and was listed as 24 years old. Jim was married to his wife Esther and was living at 1425 E. 113th Street in a two bedroom apartment with two young children, his brother Leon and his widowed mother Stamoula. Morris, Leon's father does not appear in any of the immigration or census records. In all likelihood, he had died in Greece before the family came to the USA.

The family surname is often spelled in many different ways (Genie, Genis, Jenny) reflecting the fact that these Greek surnames were strange to the scribes that recorded them.

As in most Yanniote families, the first generation in the USA would marry among themselves. Fani Jenny, the oldest of the siblings, married a cousin, Bechoraki (Morris) Genee). Leon, on the other hand, would marry into the traditional Sephardic world. The next generation would often find their spouses in the Ashkenazi world.



Leon and Katie Jenny

Leon and Katie had four children: Stella, Millie, Morris and Eli. The family lived in the Bronx.



Eli and Morris Jenny

Eli Jenny married Shirley Rosenthal in 1966 and now is the proud father of two daughters, Kara and Melissa, and four grandchildren (Molly, Max, Ian and Chad).



In essence the story of the Jenny family is the story of Greek-Jewish immigration to the United States. The families were poor in Greece, came to the United States to make a better life for themselves and their children, worked hard, and tried to pass on the traditions and customs of a culture that was certainly different from that of their surrounding Jewish and non-Jewish world.

Here, at Kehila Kedosha Janina, we believe that you cannot possibly know who you are if you do not know where you came from.

Here, at Kehila Kedosha Janina, we are proud to tell the story of the Jenny family.