

The Schenker Family

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My grandmother's maiden name was Schenker. If the stories are true, the family was fairly prosperous. In the early twentieth century, they owned a piano, and I was told, gilded furniture. There was at least one Christian servant girl working for them.

There is one story that I don't know whether to believe. It seems the Czar (probably the visit of the president of Lithuania in 1928) came to visit the vicinity of Sveksna. As per usual protocol the Count gave his home to the Czar and his entourage. Then needing a place to sleep the Count showed up at my great grandfather's home. My only problem with this is why didn't he pick a Christian home to stay at? There may have been good reasons and my great grandfather may have been a respected member of the community, but I still wonder.

Here is the photograph of the family home (This photo is reduced from a much larger wall hanging that my grandmother had.):



My grandmother had a picture of a cemetery in what I assumed was Sveksna. I found the picture and looking at it again it clearly is not a cemetery in the usual sense. I wonder if it is one of the Monuments placed on the Common Graves of the Holocaust Victims.* I have also included the reverse of the photo. If the Yiddish can be translated it might help explain what this is. What does stand out is the Julian date Feb. 19 1959, which is when I presume this was when the photo was taken.



It is the Memorial for the Holocaust victims of Sveksna.

The translation is: A remembrance from the terrible, bloody mass grave, where the closest members of your family are. It was taken at the time of the opening.

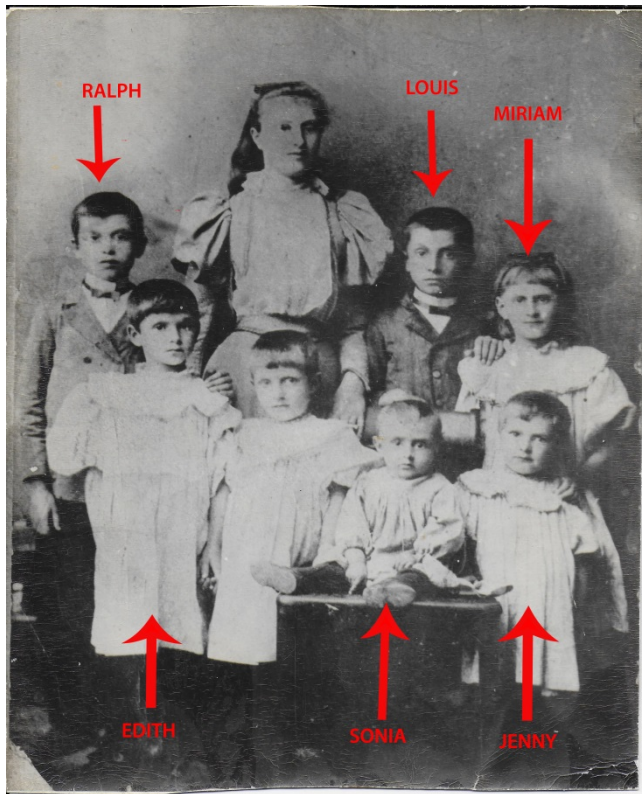
28 days in the month of Elul, is the Yahrzeit of your closest relatives.

19 February 1959 Kaunas were the pictures completed. Some of them were given to ?? [I am not sure about the name, may be Moshe – YK].

(It was translated by Yocheved Klausner of Be'er Sheva, Israel.)

In going through my parents photographs I found one photograph of the Schenker family.

Please continue to the next page.



There were (tentative) identifications of only some members on the back of the photo. I will give you the birth years of the family members who I know came to the US. These years and the year of immigration were reported by the individuals to the US Census. They seem to agree with records in the Ellis Island database. The older members of my mother's family who came from Crimea appear very well assimilated in their early twentieth century photographs but had no idea of their actual birth dates, or even it seems the Hebrew year of their birth. I assume that it was the same situation in Lithuania.

NAME	BIRTH	DEATH	ARRIVAL
Louis Scheinker	1888	1975	1905
Edith Schenker	1892	1980	1909
Jennie Schenker	1898	1977	1913

I don't know why Louis Scheinker's name was spelled that way by someone on the steamship line and he never changed it.

My grandmother Edith, who never really learned to speak English well, has NO last name specified on the steamship manifest.

Sonia Schenker settled in Argentina. I do not know when she was born, her married name, or when she arrived there. She had two sons.

The "Ralph" in the picture may have died by 1924 because Edith had a son that year who she named Ralph. I cannot find in immigration information on Miriam Schenker and I can do nothing with the other people without their names.

As I assume was typical, the Schenkers traveled with Yiddish names and Americanized their names once they were in the US. The record for Jennie Schenker is cross referenced for some reason and I am sure that it is correct. The records for Louis and Edith correspond to the correct dates. Here is a photograph of Jennie. Jennie was a favorite great aunt of mine.



"Kowno" is given as the last place of residence of Edith and Louis. It may have been the only place in Lithuania that the shipping people knew. Google Earth states that today it is a "county" in Lithuania while Wikipedia states that it is the Polish name for the city Kaunas. Again the ages and years of immigration agree to what both passengers report. Edith's surname name is a bit misspelled.

NAME	TRAVEL NAME(1)	TRAVEL NAME(2)	RESIDENCE	ARRIVAL	SHIP	PORT
Louis	Gdalic	Scheinker	Kowno	7 June 05	Kaiser Wilhelm II	Bremen
Edith	Heine	Schemkar	Kowno	11 June 09	Mauretania	Liverpool
Jennie	Scheine	Schenker	Sweksi	26 Sept 13	Pretoria	Hamburg

There is one interesting point that I cannot confirm. The ship's manifest listing Edith states that she was a servant. There was at least one older woman said to be from Kowno on the vessel. Whether she really worked as a servant or this was a fiction to facilitate her passage through Ellis Island because of her age I do not know. Like so much else, I never heard this story.



Edith



The sisters, Edith, Jennie, and Sonia (left to right)

A quick look at the Jewish Gen website did not seem to reveal information about the Crimea in general or Simferopol, in particular, which is where my mother's family hails from. I do not know that I feel up to writing a 1000 years of Jewish history of the area even though the topic does interest me. As you probably know, in 1492 when the Jews were told to leave Spain the Ottomans sent a fleet of ships to fetch them. They did not want that talent to go to waste. It must be an interesting story with ups and downs like everywhere else.