

In October 2015, my cousin, Mort Collier, sent me this story about my Aunt Annette's journey to the United States. Mort's grandfather was David Schwartz, the father of my maternal grandmother, Rose Schwartz Lemanowitz. Mort's mother and Rose were half-sisters. (His mother, Anna Schwartz Collier, was Rose's half-sister.) Prior to his email with this story, I had mailed him the newspaper article from 1930 describing the incident that led to Annette moving to NY—a story that my mother, Gladys, had shared with Donna and me throughout our childhood. Here is the amazing story that Mort shared with me:

***Thank you, Rob, I received today the full-size printout of the absolutely fascinating story about Annette and the fellow who had become infatuated with her and kidnapped her and forced her to say she would marry him. Of course, Annette later repudiated her promise because she had no interest in him and her promise was made under duress. He later attacked Annette with a gun and nearly killed her.***

***This was a very fascinating story to me, since I spent nearly two years living in her upper west side New York apartment and she never mentioned that part of her life. However, during that time she told me about how her mother, Rose, left her in or about 1913, when she was an infant, with her grandmother, somewhere in Russia or Poland and how the grandmother and she lived in the woods and scavenged and begged for food and clothing and shelter.***

***Very few people offered help and they resorted to eating wild berries, the bark of trees, edible plants and roots and if they could not find shelter somewhere, they dug a hole in the ground in which they huddled together and covered themselves with leaves to protect from the cold.***

***They had no home because they had been forced to evacuate their homes as a result of the Pogroms against the Jews which were taking place all through Russia and Poland. during the latter part of the nineteenth (1860's on) and early 20th century. (1900 through 1930).***

***It appears that the grandmother with whom Rose left her infant, Annette, was her Mother-in-Law. She was the woman who was the mother of Rose's husband and who lent her support to Rose in obtaining a Get (divorce) from her son, the father of Annette. This also explains why she was willing to accept responsibility for this infant because it was indeed her granddaughter.***

***After seven years of living under such extreme circumstances, the grandmother decided she could no longer take care of the child and she told Annette who was now 7 years old, that she was going to have to make it on her own. She pinned a note inside Annette's coat showing her name and their former address and the mother's name (Rose [Schwartz] -husbands name ). She instructed Annette to go west through the forest many, many miles till she reached a railroad and then take a train going North to Warsaw. This child had no money, so she boarded a freight car and did make it to Warsaw. The Grandmother told her when she reached Warsaw to ask directions to the HIAS (Hebrew Immigration Aid Society) office.***

***When she reached HIAS there were hundreds of people wanting help to go to other countries where they could find relatives or just to live in peace. The woman in the line in front of her looked at this 7-year-old child and said Annette would not meet the health requirements and HIAS would not take her because she had an ear infection and sores all over her body from insect bites.***

***This total stranger woman took pity on the child and said she should tell HIAS she was her daughter. The ruse which this wonderful stranger woman concocted worked and Annette made it to the Ellis Island HIAS office. Here HIAS each week would publish in the principal Jewish Newspaper "The Daily Forward" a list of immigrant people looking for relatives.***

***We will never know the name of this wonderful total stranger, but we hope that somehow Providence has provided for her since that time.***

***On that day in 1920, Rose saw her daughter's name on the immigrant list and she and Jake Lemanowitz, her new husband, went to New York to retrieve her now seven-year-old daughter.***

***My cousin Gladys [Lemanowitz] Westle told me that her father Jake Lemanowitz on several occasions sent money to the grandmother in Russia and never received an acknowledgement or a note of thanks. I would suppose that Jake and Rose did not realize that the grandmother was also driven from her home and with the baby on her hands had to scrounge and beg and scrape and perhaps steal for almost seven years for every drop of food they ate.***

***It is truly a credit to the fortitude and courage of this old woman and the little child who miraculously survived the seven-year ordeal.***

***When Annette met Jack Hersh and they wanted to get married they came to my parents Aunt Ann and Uncle Myer (Myer and Ann Collier) and they helped by arranging and actually making the wedding for them.***

***Annette was eternally grateful and in 1984 when I needed a place to live (for two years) while I worked in New York as manager of a New York Construction Company, Annette invited me to stay with her and would accept no rent.***

***If you are able to determine the name of the Paternal Grandmother with whom Annette lived for seven years, that would complete the story.***

Sent via email to me by Morton Collier

10/21/15