

Antonina's World: Eastern European Immigration For Grade 2

Session #1-Pre-lesson

Explore with students why people from Eastern European countries decided to move to America, and where they ended up living. You can use **Slide/image #2 of a map of Europe** to point out Poland and Russia.

Make a list with students of why people left Poland and other Eastern European countries.

Tell them that they will be making pictures to go along with the three stories below. Each child can choose part of one story to illustrate with at least one drawing. Before the class begins, ask:

- Which story do you want to make drawings for? Why?
- When you close your eyes and think of that person's story, what pictures do you see in your head? Decide which one(s) you will draw. Make sure to give your picture a title or a sentence about why you drew it.

Sharing with the rest of the class can take place via a Zoom session with each student given time to show their artwork, followed by time for comments and questions from the rest of the class.

Parts of this book might prove helpful: *Coming to America: The Story of Immigration*, by Betsy Maestro. As a whole, the book is best for grades 3 and up, but teachers of younger grades might find sections in the first half of the book to be helpful for a chronological look at who came from where and why, and where they settled.

Made into America: Immigrant Stories Archive is a website with immigrant stories from around the world. Portions of the following stories might prove useful. Printed excerpts for reading aloud to students are also included in this lesson plan. Portions of David and Henia's stories are used in Session #2.

- [David Milliken](#)
- [Henia Katz Maimon](#)
- [Ida Goldstein](#)

Session #2- From Poland to America

1. Review with students some of the reasons why people from Eastern European countries chose to move to America. Tell them that they will be learning about Antonina Osmola- a real young woman from Poland who moved to Turners Falls, Massachusetts. Her reasons for leaving Poland were similar to David Milliken's. Ask:

- What was it like in David's house in Poland? (crowded, noisy)
- Do you think his family was rich or poor? Why? (poor- couldn't buy all the food that they wanted, couldn't buy a bigger house, had a hard time saving enough money to send David to gymnasium (high school))

2. Like David, Antonina also came from a big family in a little house in Poland and her family was not rich. She came from a small village named Wojslaw (pronounced "voyswaff"). Show **slide/image #3 of a Polish house**. Maybe Antonina's house looked like this. She had 4 sisters and one brother. With 2 parents, that would be 7 people living in her little house. When Antonina was 15, she decided it was time to move to America. She had an aunt and uncle and cousins who lived in Gill, Massachusetts and she wrote a letter to them to see if they would let her stay there. They said yes.

3. Show **slide/image #4 of horse & cart**. Before her big trip to America, Antonina had probably never been in a car or a bus or a train or a boat! David had a bicycle, but we don't know if Antonina did. We don't know if girls in Poland were allowed to ride bikes. People in Antonina's village used carts pulled by horses or they walked.

4. To start her journey to America, Antonina had to get from Wojslaw to Hamburg, Germany, which was far away. She probably got on a train alone, and for the first time ever, and spent the whole day traveling to Hamburg.

5. **Show slide/image #5 of steamship- SS Normannia**. Then she got on a ship like this one to sail to Ellis Island in New York. Here's what another girl named Henia Katz remembered about her trip from Poland to America. She was 16 years old. Read aloud:

Henia traveled to Rotterdam, Holland to take a ship to get to the United States and brought nothing. The conditions aboard the ship were terrible. She lived in a 3rd class [cheap] room and slept in compact [little] bunk beds with the other poor passengers. Not only were the conditions terrible but she had very little to eat. Finally, after a week of travel, she arrived on Ellis Island in New York.

- How do you think Antonina and Henia felt as they started their journeys? How would you feel?
- Antonina only brought with her the beads she used when she prayed and her little prayer book. If you were moving far away and could only bring one or two things, what would they be?

Ask students to draw pictures of what they would bring. Give them time to share their artwork via a Zoom session. They can talk about why their items are special to them.

Session #3- Life in Turners Falls

1. Show **slide/image #6 of family ready to leave Ellis Island**. At Ellis Island Antonina and all of the other newcomers from the ship had to have health check-ups and answer a lot of questions. Sick people weren't allowed to enter America. They were sent back to their countries. People who had no money and nobody already in America to help them were also sent back. Antonina was lucky. She was healthy and she told the people asking the questions that she was going to Gill, Massachusetts to stay with her aunt and uncle and cousins on their farm. She was allowed to enter America.
 2. Life was so different in America than in Poland! A lady named Golda Meir came to America from Russia when she was 8. She said, "Going to America then was almost like going to the moon", a place that was "totally strange to us." She couldn't understand what people were saying and she couldn't read their words. They ate different kinds of food and wore different clothes. Everything looked different. Antonina probably felt the same way!
 3. Show **slide/image #7 of a Massachusetts map showing the location of Turners Falls**. At first, Antonina helped on her uncle's farm in Gill. It is just above Turners Falls in the right-hand bend of the river. Then she left when she got a job at the Griswold Cotton Mill in Turners Falls. Point out Turners Falls.
 4. Show **slide/image #8 of the Griswold Cotton Mill**. It is the red building in this picture. The workers there ran machines called "looms" that made plain white cloth. Antonina didn't speak English very well yet and she didn't know how to work a loom, so before she could start work she had to pay someone who spoke Polish and who worked in the mill to show her what to do. Show **slide/image #9 of girl at loom**. We don't know what Antonina's job was, but maybe she fixed broken or tangled threads on the looms. Maybe she took full bobbins (spools) of thread off of the machine that made thread for the looms and put empty ones on. Maybe she folded and wrapped up the finished cloth for sale.
 5. Return to **slide/image #8** While she worked at the cotton mill, Antonina lived very close to it with the other girls and women who worked in the mill. Find the white building in the picture. That's where she lived. She could walk to work. The building she lived in was called a "boardinghouse". She had her own bed but not her own room. She didn't have to cook. A lady who worked at the boardinghouse cooked breakfast, lunch, and dinner for everybody.
- After her long days of work at the mill, Antonina went to school at night to learn how to speak English.
6. Show **slide/image #10 of Antonina's wedding**. When Antonina was 17, she met a nice man named Jan Sojka (pronounced Yahn Soyka) at a friend's wedding. When she was 18, they were married and Antonina stopped working in the mill. Show **slide/image #11 of the Sojka home**. Soon, they bought a house in Turners Falls (it is still there). They had 9 children.

Session #4- Write a Postcard

Teacher- lesson plan includes copies of old postcards that can be printed on heavy paper. If you can't print them, contact the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association at pvmaoffice@deerfieldmuseum.org , 413-774-7476, ext. 100, and the postcards will be printed for you. If you live or work near Deerfield, MA, you can pick them up at our administrative office. Otherwise, they can be mailed to you.

Postcards:

Main Street, Greenfield, MA (located near Turners Falls)

Turners Falls, Mass. Industrial Plants- view of the mills

Grammar School, South Deerfield (located near Turners Falls)

Weeding Onions, Sunderland, Mass. (located near Turners Falls)

Hon. Dana Malone Residence, Greenfield, Mass.- example of a wealthy home

Interior E.C. Brown's Store, Bernardston, Mass. (located near Turners Falls)

New England Views on Boston & Maine. R.R.- Deerfield Valley, Mass.

All of the above postcards are from the digital collection of the *American Centuries* website.

Antonina knew how to read and write Polish but some of her friends and family didn't. They came to her when they needed help reading letters from people still at home in Poland or when they wanted to write to their loved ones there.

What would Antonina and her friends and family say to their people still living in Poland? Think about what you have learned so far about Antonina's trip to America, her job, and the places she lived. Pretend to be her when you write your postcard. Here are some ideas about what to write:

- What was scary about coming to America?
- What do you like best about living in America?
- What do you miss?
- What did you learn that is new?



Image #2
Pixy.org



Image #3- a house in Poland
Pixabay.com



Image #4
Wikimedia Commons



Image #5- SS Normannia
Library of Congress



Image #6- Family ready to leave Ellis Island
nypl.getarchive.net

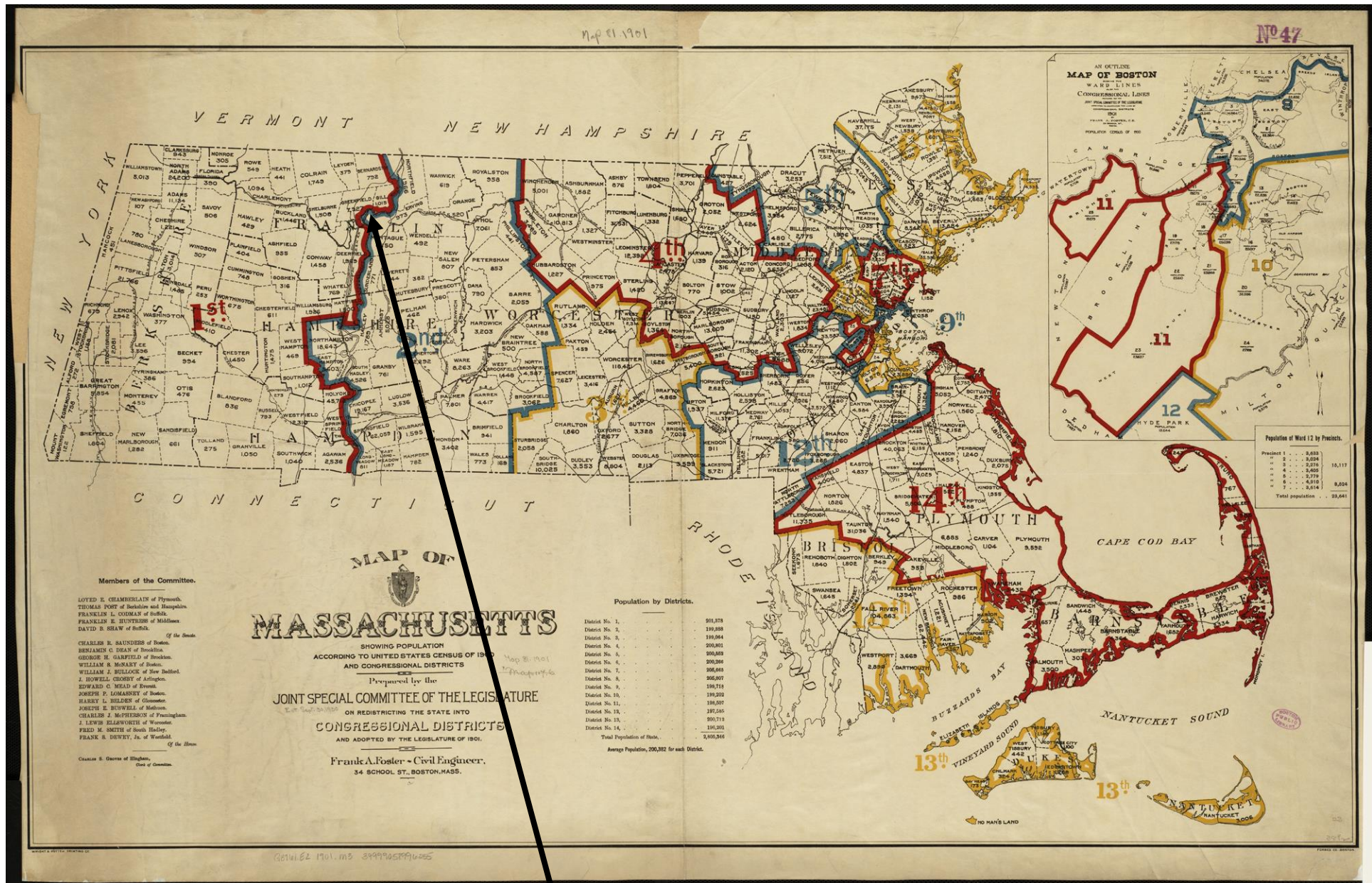




Image #8- Antonina worked in the red building and lived in the white building
Wikimedia Commons



Image #9- girl working at a loom that makes cloth
picryl.com



**Image #10- Antonina's wedding day, May 1907
from a private collection**



**Image #11- Antonina and Jan lived in this house in Turners Falls, Massachusetts. The house is still there.
From a private collection**

From Wola Ducka, Poland to New York: The Story of David Milliken

Lubelska to Trakt Lubelski to Słoneczna to Zdrojowa. Every day; Lubelska to Trakt Lubelski to Słoneczna to Zdrojowa. This was the path my great-grandfather took to the local grocery market in Wola Ducka, from his house. Clouds of dirt rose behind him as he cycled into town to get food for dinner. Three miles there, three miles back, every day he would bike. The grocery store had all of the best foods; Babka [coffecake with raisins, chocolate, or nuts] and Pączki [a Polish jelly doughnut] were his favorites. Every day he would reach out for them, wanting to put them in his basket so he could go home and devour them, only to remember his mission; he was to get dinner and only dinner, no dessert or special foods allowed.

A small brown crowded house outside of Warsaw was what he came home to. Walking into the front door he would see his five sisters all clustered around one bed in a dimly lit room. His six brothers were often running around the dining room table, made for eight but with fourteen seats pushed around it, chasing each other and screaming at the top of their lungs. His father sat in his chair at the table working while his step-mother hurried David into the house to get the dinner supplies so she could cook. The house quickly filled with the smell of dinner as everyone gathered around to help.

David Milliken, my great-grandfather, had a very simple, yet exciting, migration [trip] to America. Living in Poland outside of Warsaw, David started his life with his two parents and five siblings [brothers and sisters] in a small crowded house in Wola Ducka, Poland. Things got worse when his mother, only thirty-one years old, passed away [died] when he was six. Two years later his father remarried. Over the next eight years, his father and step-mother had six more children. The house, now bustling with people, was getting too small. Needing to pay for David's older brother's and sister's gymnasium, the family could not afford to buy a bigger house. (In early 19th century Poland, education after high school, or what we call college, was referred to as "gymnasium"). The family also knew that they would soon have to send David to gymnasium as well. Two years later David went off to gymnasium in Warsaw, attending the University of Warsaw studying to be a doctor.

In early 1914, a senior in college, David came home for break. His father and step-mother, still busy with the seven kids then at home, became wary of [worried about] the approaching war. They urged David to follow his brother and sister and leave Poland once he finished college. David thought over the proposal [idea] and decided to finish college and follow his older brother's footsteps and move to America.

Henia Katz Maimon's Story

Henia was born in 1903 in a small village named Ozmanaya, Poland into a farming family with the dream to become something greater than what she was. When Henia was only two years old her father died from disease and her mother soon remarried. Her mother gave birth to her step sister and she soon began to be ignored by both her parents and would receive only some straw and a blanket for bedding. She would later tell her daughter that she was "the Jewish Cinderella". When Henia was 11 years old she was diagnosed with the mumps, a very dangerous and deadly disease, which is now preventable by a vaccine [medicine]. Because of the disease, she lost hearing fully in one of her ears and could barely hear in her other one.

As she grew older she began to hate her life in Poland and finally, when she was 16, she decided to leave home to find a new life in the United States. She contacted her Aunt and Uncle who were living in the United States and they told her she could stay with them. Henia traveled to Rotterdam, Holland to take a ship to get to the United States and brought nothing. The conditions aboard the ship were terrible. She lived in a 3rd class [cheap] room and slept in compact [little] bunk beds with the other poor passengers. Not only were the conditions terrible but she had very little to eat. The ship served mostly herring [a kind of fish] for the trip which she could not eat because she was Kosher [a person whose religion was Jewish and who followed the Jewish laws about what foods they could or couldn't eat]. Finally, after a week of travel, she arrived on Ellis Island in New York expecting her Aunt and Uncle to meet her there. She searched for them even though she was mostly deaf and didn't speak a word of English. Eventually, she realized that they were not there but [she] was not allowed to enter the country. This is because single women were not allowed to immigrate [come to America] at the time. She was only allowed to stay for 14 days in bunks inside the facility [building] there. If her Aunt and Uncle didn't come to pick her up she would be sent back to Poland. She would later recall [remember] that "If I wasn't picked up I would have drowned myself in the ocean". Thankfully, her Aunt and Uncle arrived on the 13th day after reading about it in the Yiddish newspaper [written in the Jewish language] where young Jewish immigrants were often listed when they arrived.

[Henia got her first job in a button factory in Connecticut, but she fell in love with a man from Brooklyn, New York and moved there to marry him.]

Ida Goldstein's Story

This is a story about my Grandma Ida.

Here is what I know: She came to the United States from Russia around 1910, when she was fourteen years old. Before she left, it was a dangerous time to be a Jew [a religion] in her village; and even though she was just a young girl, she and her friends weren't allowed to ever stand or walk together in a group of three or more, or the soldiers would rough them up to separate them.

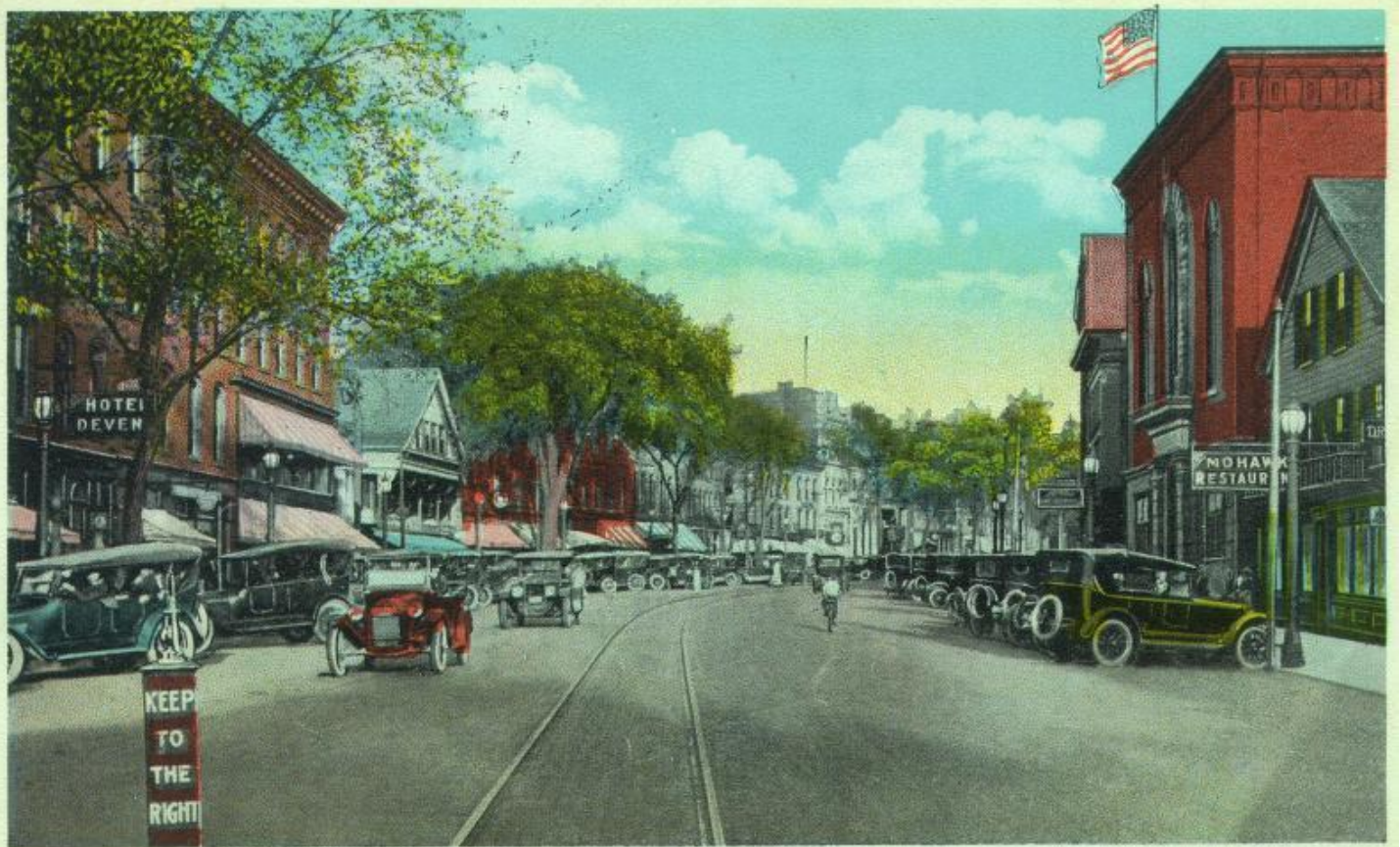
My Grandma Ida told me these things while she knitted, clackety-clack, an afghan [blanket] for me. She was always knitting something.

She came through Ellis Island, and lived with her older sister Edith and Edith's husband, in New Jersey. She worked in a button factory, and earned maybe ten cents a day. Three of those cents bought her daily lunch: a kipper (small fish) and a roll of bread. When she was sixteen she married Edith's husband's brother, my Grandpa Izzy. When she was seventeen, she gave birth to a still-born baby boy [he was dead when he was born]. When she was nineteen, she gave birth to my mother, at home, because she was afraid if she went to the hospital, the baby would die again.

These things she told me while she sipped a cup of hot tea, with a sugar cube between her teeth. Sometimes she'd tell me about the silver samovar [fancy teapot] in her nice house in her village, which kept the tea hot all day. She told me very little about Russia, because she always started to cry when she talked about her home, and her mother. Somewhere there is a photograph of some stern looking people posing, and I wonder if one of them is my great-grandmother. My mother would get upset at me for asking questions that made my grandmother so sad, so I stopped asking.

Izzy and Ida had a laundry, first in New Jersey, and then later on, in New York. My grandma would wash and iron other people's clothes, every day, except Saturday. She put my mother in one of those rolling laundry baskets, to play by herself while she and her husband worked. This she told me when she ironed a shirt for me, teaching me how to smooth the cuffs and straighten the collar. She ironed with a damp cloth to make steam. Whenever I smell steam from a hot iron, that is always my grandmother to me. She scrubbed and washed and ironed and cooked and cleaned every single day.

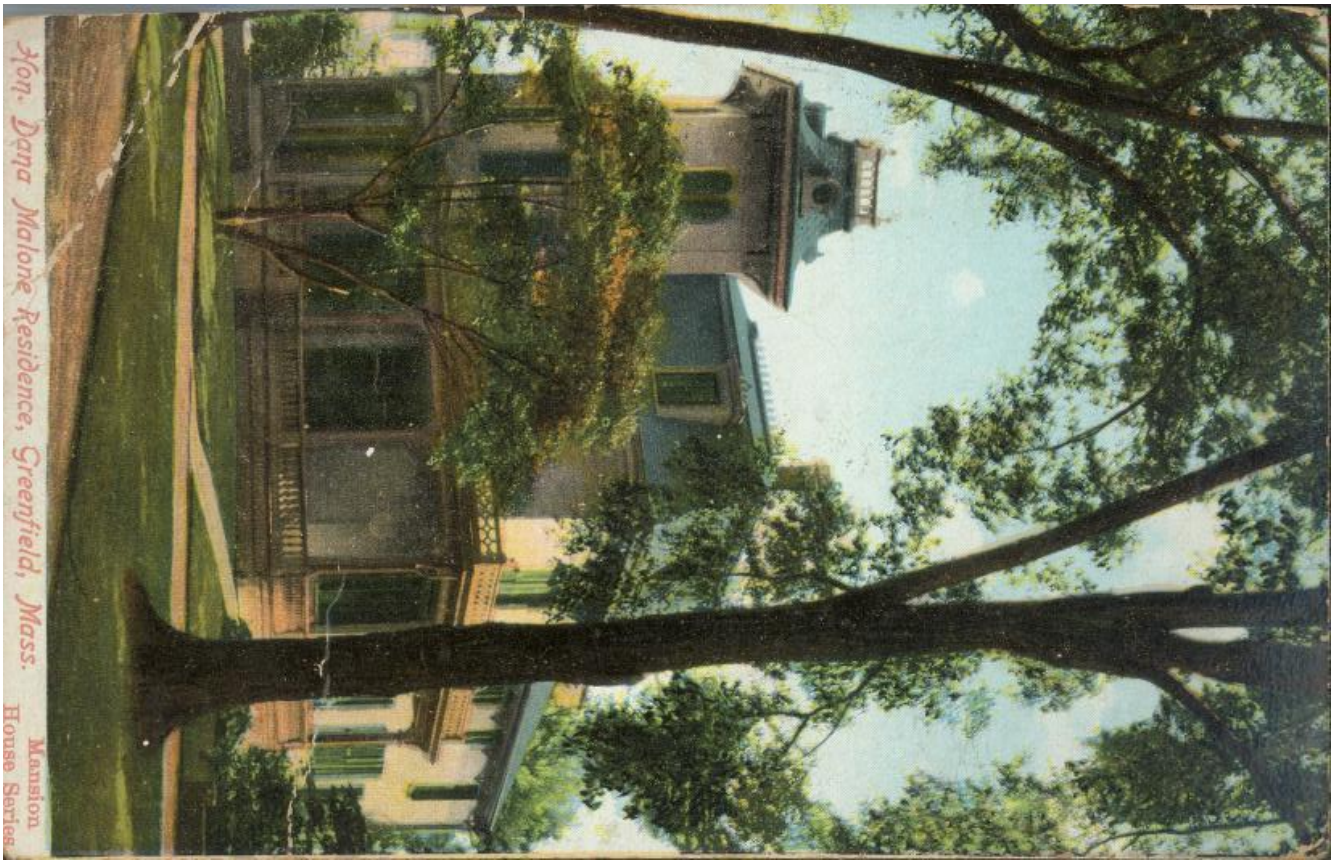
I wish I had asked her so much more.



59. MAIN STREET, GREENFIELD, MASS.





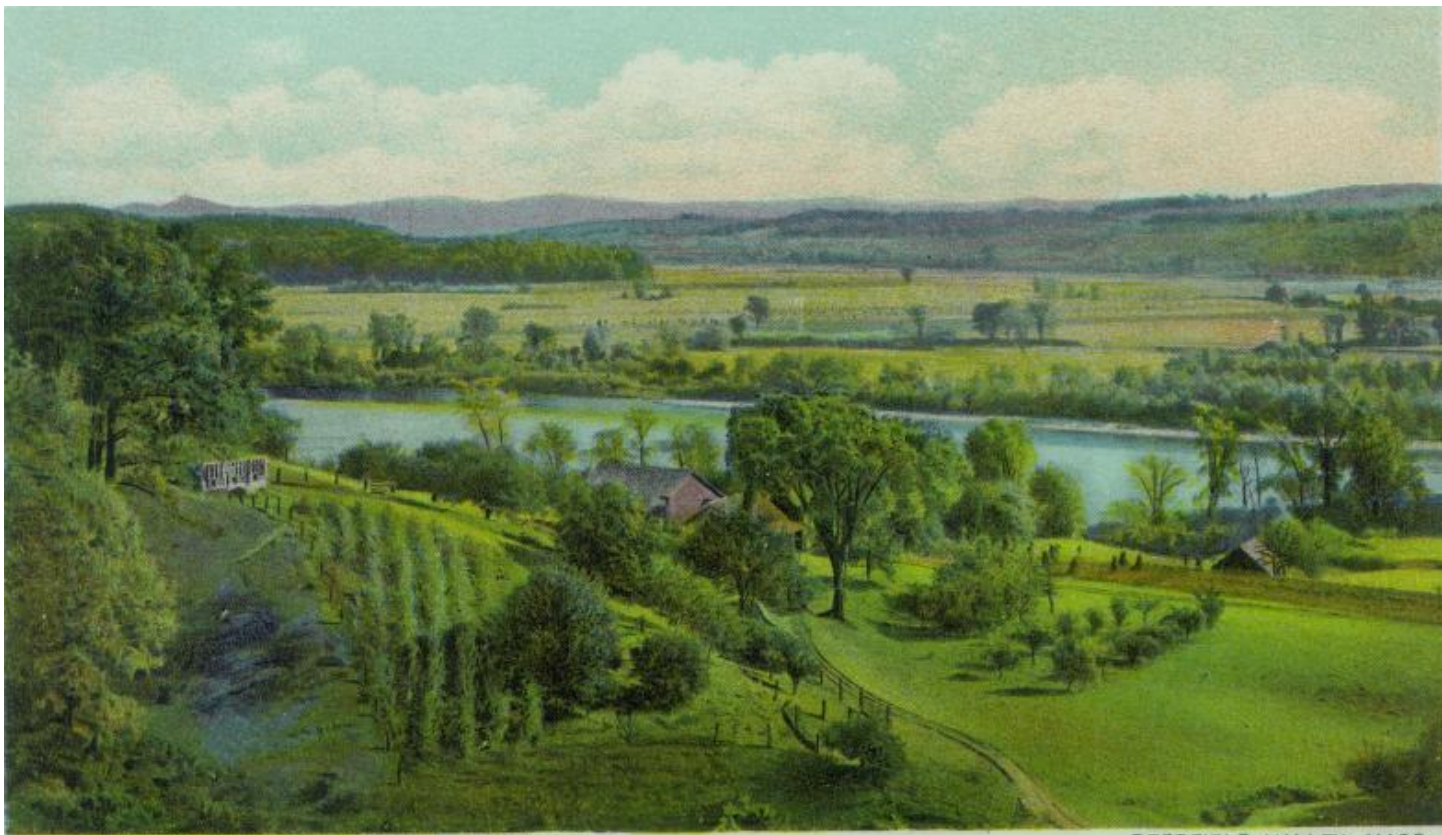


Dana Malone Residence, Greenfield, Mass.

Mansion House Series



Interior E.C. Brown's Store Lexington Mass.



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