

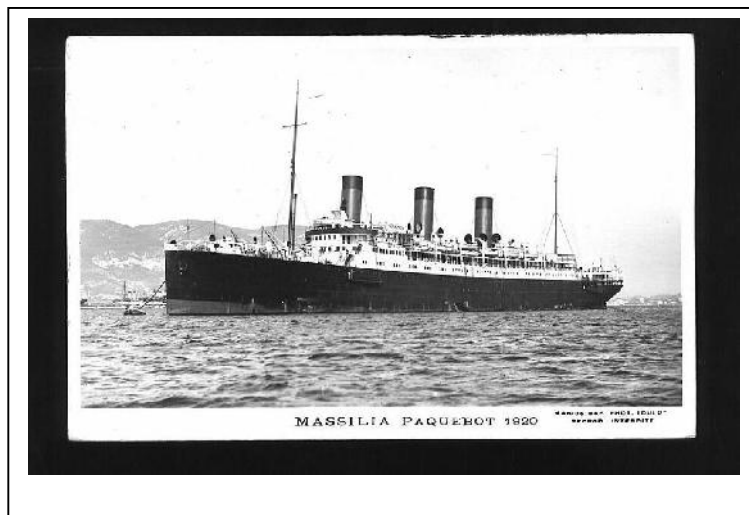
Half the Jewish community of Ioannina would immigrate to the USA from 1902-1924. They came seeking a better life for themselves and their children. Initially, most settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The Genee family was typical of this immigration.

Morris Genee came to the USA from Greece in 1907 on the Massalia leaving Patras on June 4<sup>th</sup> and arriving at Ellis Island on June 21st. He is listed as single and would marry his wife Fani (a cousin) later.



Fani Jenny's family: standing from left (Fani and her sister Esther), seated from left (brother Leon, mother Stamoula Battino Jenny and brother Jim)

All three of Morris and Fani's children were born on the Lower East Side, Abraham in 1912, Alice in 1914 and Hy in 1922. The family lived at 54 Orchard Street in 1920, 271 Broome in 1925 and back to Orchard Street (#81) in 1926. Morris is listed as "Becorakis" Ghenis (sic) on the ship manifest, and 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. "Becorakis," is an affectionate nickname denoting the "first born" male. On the ship manifest he is listed as a laborer going to A. Negrin, his "countryman." He had \$10 in his possession and was 5'6", dark complexioned with black hair and brown eyes. Bechorakis was detained at Ellis Island because the young boy from the Atas family that he had brought with him was awaiting the arrival of his father. We can only imagine his thoughts, arriving in a new land, not speaking the language and watching as others from his ship went ashore.



Hy Genee, Morris' third child was enamored with his Greek-Jewish background and absorbed the culture, language and the liturgy of Greek-speaking Romaniote Jews. Hy, who almost single-handedly kept Kehila Kedosha Janina alive, married Lil Ferman, who also grew up on the Lower East Side, on October 19, 1946.



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2.



3.



4.



5.

- 1. Fani Genee
- 2. Hy & Lil Genee wedding photo
- 3. Hy Genee Bar Mitzvah
- 4. Hy & Lil with their children and grandchildren
- 5. Hy & Lil on Lower East Side with Fani.

Hy passed away in 2006 and is deeply missed by the community of Kehila Kedosha Janina and, of course, his devoted family.

Lil's father died when Lil was quite young, leaving her mother, Dora, a widow who worked as a "finisher in cloaks," to support her two young children, Lil and her sister Eva who was three years older.



Lil Ferman Genee



Lil came from a traditional Ashkenazi family, originally from Russia, but soon embraced the foods and culture of Greek Jewry. Hy, like so many Yanniote Jews, found employment in some aspect of the textile industry. For Hy, it was the making of men's pants in his shop on the Lower East Side (Hy-Mart Pants). Never leaving the Lower East Side, Hy and Lil passed their love of their heritage on to their children.

In essence the story of the Genee and Ferman families is the story of Jewish immigration to the Lower East Side. As the years passed more and more Greek Jews would marry into the traditional Sephardic and Ashkenazi

worlds but many, like the Genee family, would continue to celebrate their special Greek heritage.

We thank the children of Hy and Lil, Marty and Lois, and their cousin David Bellel, for helping to make this exhibit possible.

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 Genee and Ferman families.



The Genee mini exhibit has been created as part of our new exhibit (Memories).

Memories speaks to the world Greek Jews left behind; in this case for the Genee Family, Ioannina of 1907

And the world they found here in the United States. For the Genee and Ferman families, this was the Lower East Side of Manhattan.



Kehila Kedosha Janina  
280 Broome Street  
1939