

Chapter 2

ANNA AXLER



Ann, circa 1922

It is still Saturday, December 4, and now I am interviewing Ann Marks. Sitting in on this interview is Ellen Marks. I'm going to ask each of you to say your full name, how old you are and where you were born.

Ann: Actually, my name is Anna Marks. But I didn't like that name, and so some years ago I just dropped that last "a" and kept Ann. I am 83 years old. And I was born in New York City.

Were you born in Queens?

Ann: Geez, I can't remember, now wait a minute. My sister was, but I don't know if I was. No, I was born in Manhattan, on 100th Street.



Sophie's parents, c 1924

Ellen: My name is Ellen Marlene Marks. I'm 45 years old, and I was also born in New York, in Massapequa, Long Island.

Ann, did you know your grandparents?

Ann: Yes.

Who were they?

Ann: You mean names? Baba and Zaida. That's who they were. That was my mother's parents.

Do you remember their names?

Ann: I don't know. I have a feeling that maybe her name was Chana, but I'm not sure. I just knew her as Baba.

Did you know your father's parents?

Ann: No.

Where
were your
grandparents
born?

Ann: In Russia.

Did they
meet in
Russia or
did they
meet over
here?



Aunt Paulie, Ann, Aunt Bessie

Ann: I think they met in Russia.

Do you know how many children they had?

Ann: I don't know. I would say about seven, but I'm not sure I can remember all the names. It was so long ago. Let's see, there was Katie and there was Bessie, and Paulie, and Sonia. I remember Katie and Bessie, and Paulie. And there was an uncle, Uncle Bill and Uncle Sam. Sam was the youngest, I think.

Wasn't there an
Aunt Rose, also?

Ann: Oh yes, I almost forgot. And also Uncle Hershel. I think that's about right.

So nine kids: Katie,
Bessie, Paulie,
Sophie, Sonia, Bill,
Rose, Hershel and
Sam. Did your father
have brothers or sisters?



*Bessie, Sonia, Katie, Rose,
Unidentified Relative, Willie, Paulie, Sophie*

Ann: Yes. There was Uncle Morris and Uncle Bernie, and . . . There must have been more, but I can't remember. I'm not sure, but I think an Uncle Izzie, if I'm not mistaken. And also Uncle Bob.

Do you know why and how your mother came over to the States?

Ann: Yeah. Well, they were ostracized in Russia, and they had to leave their homes—everything was taken away from them. I think that's what made them come to the United States.

So your mother came over. You said earlier that she wasn't the oldest, but she was the first to come.

Ann: Yes, I think that's true.

Do you have any idea how they got the money to send her over here?

Ann: Well . . . I don't know how they got the money to send her over. But I do know that once she came over, she immediately got a job sewing in a factory, a garment factory. And she saved enough money to send back for one of the sisters. Then the two sisters worked in the factory and saved enough money to send over for the next one. And that's how they all got here.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ORIGINAL
TO BE GIVEN TO
THE PERSON NATURALIZED

CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION

No. **5728523**

Petition No. **392722**

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Age **53** years, sex **Female**, color **White**, complexion **Fair**, color of eyes **Grey**, color of hair **Brown**, height **5** feet **7** inches, weight **132** pounds, visible distinctive marks **None**, marital status **Married**, former nationality **Russian**.

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.


Sophie Axler
Seal

(Complete and true signature of holder)
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK } S.S.
Best known, that at a term of the _____ District _____ Court of
The United States.
held pursuant to law at _____ Brooklyn
on December 16th, 1943 the Court having found that
SOPHIE AXLER
then residing at 175-11 137th Avenue, Springfield Gardens, N.Y.,
intends to reside permanently in the United States (when so required by the
Naturalization Laws of the United States), had in all other respects complied with
the applicable provisions of such naturalization laws, and was entitled to be
admitted to citizenship, therefore ordered that such person be and she was
admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.
In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 16th
day of December in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and
forty three and of our Independence the one hundred
and sixty eighth

It is a violation of the U.S. Code (and
punishable as such) to copy, print, photograph,
or otherwise illegally use this certificate.

By *Percy S. B. Grier*
Clerk of the _____ U.S. District _____ Court
By *William H. Hearn* Deputy Clerk.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

So when she came over, were there any relatives here that she stayed with?

Ann: Not that I know of.

Do you know how old she was when she came over?

Ann: No, I don't.

Ellen: You told me a story that I remember very well, about how Baba first got her period on the ship. You said she was about 15.

Ann: Oh yeah, that's right.

Ellen: And she had no idea what her period was.

Ann: That's right.

Ellen: Because nobody had ever told her about it. So she was totally scared, absolutely crazy.

Ann: She threw her underwear over the ship into the water because she didn't know what to do. She saw blood and she just threw the underwear overboard.

My mom recently told me a story about Baba when she first came over to the States. She told me that Baba worked in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, that one where they had the big fire that killed all the young women who worked there.

Ann: I knew she worked in a factory.

Well, she told me that two weeks before the big fire, the union organizer was talking to Baba in the hallway—apparently he was “sweet on her,” my mom said—and the boss fired her. It's a strange thing that getting fired in this case was a lucky break, but otherwise we might not be here today.

Ann: Well, I don't remember that. But that's interesting.

No. 1937637

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

To be given to the person Naturalized.

Operation of

Particulars of 573 Number 136668

Description of holder: Age 32 years, height 5 feet 1 inches, color white, complexion fair, color of eyes blue, color of hair brown, visible distinguishing marks none

Name, age and place of residence of wife: x x x x (Strike through words referring to wife if husband was naturalized AFTER September 22, 1922.)

Name, age and place of residence of minor children: Joseph B. and Hannah 2 yrs. (Strike through words referring to children if holder of this certificate is a married woman.)

302 East 100th Street

ORIGINAL

STATE OF NEW YORK

COUNTY OF NEW YORK

J.S. Michael Axler (Signature of holder)

Be it remembered that Michael Axler then residing at number 302 East 100th City New York State of New York, who previous to his naturalization was a subject of Russia, having applied to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America pursuant to law, and also SPECIAL form of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, held at New York, on the 4th day of February in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty-four, the court having found that the petitioner had resided continuously within the United States for at least five years and in this State for at least one year immediately preceding the date of the filing of his petition, and that said petitioner intends to reside permanently in the United States, had in all respects complied with the law in relation thereto, and that he was entitled to be so admitted, it was thereupon ordered by the said court that he be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of said court is hereunto affixed on the 4th day of February in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty-four and of our Independence the one hundred and forty-eighth

JAMES A. DONEGAN (Official character of attester)

Bernard Lines

Note: Under act of September 22, 1922 husband's naturalization does not make wife a citizen.

Do you know how your father came over here?

Ann: If I'm remembering the story correctly, I think my father came through Canada. That's the story I remember. From Russia to Canada, and then down. And that's how he brought his other brothers over, the same way. They would hire a guide of some kind and in the dark of night they would meet. And in those days, they walked. And they hid if they heard noises.

Do you know how your mother and father met each other?

Ann: No. If I knew, I don't remember.



Mike and Sophie, c 1917

Ellen: I remember stories from the letters that Aunt Frannie had translated. Grandpa wrote love letters to Baba. I don't remember the stories, but I still have the letters.

Ann: I would love to see those letters.

Ellen: I have a Grandpa file.

So your parents came over here and met each other, and courted each other. And then they got married, in New York.



Postcards from Mike to Sophie, c 1913

“My darling, I am writing to you and saying I am doing fine but missing you very much. My golden heart, I wish it was Sunday when I will see you. My darling, I thought about you all day. What are you doing? How are you feeling?

Kisses, Axler.

P.S. Tell your mom I say hello.”



See translation above