

Our Mimi's Biological Mom: Ettie Oppenheim

Many of us remember our Mimi, Arline Stein (1898-1976), speaking fondly of her mom. Anna Stein (1877-1953) was born Anna Silverman. She immigrated from Russia to the US in 1894, marrying Mimi's dad, George Stein (1870-1949), in Indiana on November 18, 1906. Arline Stein was eight years old when her Dad married Anna, her only mother of memory.

We now have a much better picture of our grandmother's biological mother, Ettie Oppenheim (1872-1899) who sadly died soon after Arline was born. Ettie was born in Detroit, Michigan, the daughter of two Lithuanian immigrants: Joseph G. Oppenheim (1844-1918) and Bessie Fanny Arnsdorff (1843-1915). Ettie had two older brothers, Mark (1864-1888) and Harris (1865-1931), who were born in the old country. The Oppenheims immigrated to the US in the late 1860's, first settling in Detroit.

Apparently, they did not enjoy the big city as much as smaller towns, more like their native Vistytis. Joseph and Bessie Oppenheim moved from Detroit to Goshen, Indiana and then to Bangor, Michigan where they lived for 23 years. In Bangor, the Oppenheims had a dry goods store called the J.G. Oppenheim and Son. One history of the Oppenheim's in the America explains, "In 1895, J.G. Oppenheim and his son Harris moved back to Goshen to join Ettie's husband, George Stein, in a new business venture, a store called the Chicago Fair."

Ettie Oppenheim and George Stein were married in January of 1896 in Bangor, Michigan. Their child, Arline Stein, was born on November 1st, 1898. Shockingly, Ettie, died in April of 1899 at only 28 years of age. Her obituary described the reason, "... the physicians think that death was caused by a perforation of the bowels..."

We once thought that Ettie might have died of complications of childbirth. This does not seem to be the case. The article from the Daily News also mentions that, "Two children were born to the couple, one of whom died." Apparently, our grandmother had a sibling who didn't survive.

The impact of Ettie Stein's death is described in her obituary, "The gloom caused in the hearts of those who knew Mrs. Stein testify to her great worth and to the

popular standing she had among her friends and acquaintances. Her beautiful womanhood had given her a conspicuous place among the people and the people of Goshen will mourn much for the death of such an excellent woman.”

Ettie Oppenheim was buried in the Oakridge Cemetery of Goshen, Indiana. Her father Joseph G. Oppenheim joined her there in 1918, as did Ettie’s brother, Harris, in 1931.

When I had recently discovered that Ettie Stein was our grandmother’s biological mother, I wondered if the Oppenheims of Goshen had kept contact and communication with their granddaughter who moved to McDonald Pa to live near her Stein relatives. I found one answer in her grandfather’s, Joseph G. Oppenheim, Last Will and Testament. The document shows that at the time of his death in 1918 Oppenheim left \$10,000 for Arline Stein – his grand-daughter in McDonald, Pa. This was the largest legacy allotted to a grandchild.

It is sometimes hard to imagine our ancestors, their human triumphs and tragedies. How happy Ettie and George Stein must have been with the successful birth of their daughter and how tragic and shocking the subsequent death of Ettie Stein, the young mother of only 28. Both the Steins and the Oppenheims made sure young Arline was cared for. And George found love again in Anna Silverman, who by all accounts was a loving, devoted mother to our grandmother.

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