

# Anna Matilda Niemi née Stenius b.1881

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**Anna Stenius during her first years in the United States. Picture is a part of Raija Niemelä's collection.**

**A**nna Matilda Stenius was born on a farm numbered 56. in the village of Kollaja in Pudasjärvi on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1881. She was the fifth child of Isak Oskar Abrahaminpoika Stenius and Pieta Jaakontytär Rääpysjärvi.

In an estate inventory deed drawn up on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1916 in the event of her father's death it is mentioned that Anna Matilda had been living in the USA for 13 years. The deed was written by Juho J. Timonen and the second appraiser was Paavo Hinkula and the appraised realty included half of Warpu ranch which had been bought during the marriage.

It appears that the people present at the writing of the deed remembered Anna's departure to the USA quite well. With the help of computers today we can find the exact dates from the Immigration Agency's web pages. Utilizing the passport catalog search we find that Anna Stenius was born 31<sup>st</sup> August 1881 in Pudasjärvi and she received a passport for the purpose of travelling to the United States on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1903. From the same webpages using the passenger catalog search we find that Anna left for Calumet, Michigan five days later on *The Regulus* by the way of Great Britain. On 9<sup>th</sup> May the journey continued from Great Britain with *The Etruria* from the Cunard-lines.

Jaakko Niemi, 20 years old, also boarded *The Regulus* and headed from Great Britain towards Port Arthur, Ontario in Canada with a Beaver-line ship. The traveller's fee was 240 Finnish Marks.

It is told in the family that Anna originally left for United States after a man. However, it seems that she was not engaged to marry by this time even though it was believed by some that she was. The name of her companion during those times has been lost, but it is known that he worked in the Petäjäkangas Sawmill in Pudasjärvi.

It so happened, that Anna met another man on her travels, him being the aforementioned Jaakko Niemi. It is believed that the two did not know each other before taking the same ship. Upon leaving her homeland for United States Anna was 21 years and 8 months old.

Soon after arriving in USA Anna sent a letter asking permission from her parents to get married to Jaakko as she was considered a minor in those days. In the letter she also mentioned that the marriage was not mandatory. After taking their time to consider the proposal her parents accepted and soon after Anna and Jaakko were married in USA. The time and place of the marriage isn't known at this time.

Anna and Jaakko settled in Copper Island, Michigan. This was a common place for newcomers-Finns to settle, since most out of the 16964 Finns that migrated to United States in the year 1803 settled in this area.

Anna and Jaakko had two children, Impi and Arne. Times of birth aren't known to the writer. However, Impi's daughter Jean tells that in an e-mail message sent on 31.1.2002 that her mother passed away in 1992 from kidney disease and her uncle Arne passed away circa 1980. This e-mail was read publicly at a Stenius family reunion for Oskari and Pieta Stenius' descendants held in Hilturanta in 2002.



**Anna Niemi and her husband Jaakko Niemi circa 1905. Picture is a part of Raija Niemelä's collection.**

Anna or any of her offspring (up to our knowledge) never visited Finland after her departure. However Anna's sister Saara's daughter Laina Helena Kärki née Pihlaja along with the later deceased Kerttu Nevala née Seliö (member of the Stenius family) visited Impi in United States in the end of 1970s. They spent a week staying in Impi's household.

Anna's daughter Impi kept in touch with some of her Finnish cousins by letters. In a New Years' letter most likely addressed to Laina in the mid-1970s she writes as follows.

*"Dear cousin Helena. I wish you are all well. We are healthy and have had a very nice Christmas. The children and 4 grand-children stayed here and we also had the smallest Jean's children years 3 and 5. Russels' girls are 10 and 11 now.*

*How is uncle Kaarlo? Arne visited us here last summer and he'll come again in the fall. When are you coming for a visit to America. Best Wishes Impi. Give my loving regards to all relatives. Write."*

The next letter found was dated on the first of May 1977 before Laina and Kerttu's journey to America:

*"Dear cousin Laina Helena. We are all doing alright. Thank you a lot for the Christmas flowers that came late for Christmas, coming from so far. It was nice to hear that you are going to travel to America. We are looking forward to seeing our Finnish relatives. You can come here, as many of you that you want. You'll do alright here. It would be very nice if Uncle Kaarlo could come too.*

*Finally summer came after such a severe winter, there was too much snow and so cold! We haven't had such a hard winter even before coming here.*

*I got such a nice letter from Uncle Kaarlo after Christmas. – Please write us a letter and I hope everything is all right there and that you can come here. My best greetings to all my cousins and Uncle Kaarlo. I haven't written before – time flies. Love Cousin Impi*

There also remains a letter written from Trimountain, Michigan after Laina and Kerttu's visit there. Trimountain is situated a little less than 10 miles Southwest of Houghton. The whole letter (with all it's mistakes) goes like this:

*"Dear cousin Laina. The winter is over, but you haven't got any letter from me to Finland. Thank you a lot for the flower-check. How have you been? We are all doing alright. I had a little flue and a cough last month. I couldn't sleep for two weeks. Nando had the same thing. The winter was nice with a little snow only. It's till spring, it snows and it melts after a while. The sun doesn't shine a lot yet. I am waiting for summer and warm weather.*

*Iida Lindqvist died at the beginning of the year. Was she the one who was in the old people's home in Calumet?*

*I wrote to Cousin Alli, I got a postcard from her from Moscow. How is Kerttu doing?*

*She thinks that we live in the same place as the Nevalas, but no, we are still living here in Trimountain, we get our mail at the post-office there.*

*Jean and the boys are alright. The same is true with David and his family; his little son John visits us often so time passes quickly. Paula works in a bank in Hancock, his sister Valerie works in Alaska, their mother and family live there. Paula is now planning visit there for three weeks at the end of this month.*

*Have you travelled anywhere lately? When will you come again to America? Nando send his greetings to all of you. Once you write to me again, Id' like to have one leaf of the book of genealogical tables (my mother's name), it got lost. 281-182. Print the same from your book.*

*Thank you and a lot of greetings to all the relatives. Love, Cousin Impi."*

Alli, mentioned in the letter, is the daughter of Impi's uncle Kaarlo, Alli Toivola née Stenius (1918-1987). Although Impi was born and raised in America, she could still write in Finnish. Her handwriting was very distinct and well oriented.

In his e-mail message sent in 2002 Jean tells us; *"My mother was always so happy when getting information about her relatives in Finland. I will always remember how excited she was when she heard about her cousins when the war years were over"*

Impi married twice. Her first husband was John Abramson, who died at the beginning of the 1950s. The second time impi married Nando Guil at the end of the 1950s. Nando died in 1998.

In her first marriage Impi had three children; Russell, Jean and David. They belong to the twelfth known generation of the family Stenius and they are second cousins to Oskari and Pieta Stenius (if no siblings). They can be found in the family tree of this publication. As far as we know there were no children in Impi's second marriage.



**Anna, Jaakko and Impi Niemi. Picture is a part of Raija Niemelä's collection.**

Impi's child Russell Abramson died in a car accident in the year 1978. He was married with two daughters, Paula and Valerie. Before our family-meeting in 2002 I got information from United States which stated that Paula Abramson lives in Alaska and Valerie Abramson in Copper Island, in Baraga, where she has a dog-grooming business. My information might be insufficient and even faulty so I am looking for more.

Jean Elizabeth Abramson is the same as aforementioned Jean. She was born in 1934 and lives in Copper Island. Jean retired from Michigan Technological University in January 1998, where she worked as a telephone operator and a dispatcher for over 25 years. (I do have to mention that I visited this university while she was still working there.) Jean tells that her grandmother Anna died while her own mother and Uncle Aarne were still living. Jean goes to Anna's grave and takes care of it every spring.

Jean has two sons, Keith and Jeffrey. Impi tells in one of her letters to Laina that her sons and Jean are

doing well. Jean also has a grandchild Megan; a daughter that Keith and his wife Christine adopted from Romania in 2000.

David Abramson is Impi's third child. His wife's name is Diane. They have a son called John, who spent a lot of time with Impi and Nando when he was a little boy.

Arne Niemi was Anna and Jaakko's younger child. Jean told me that Arne died about 20 years ago. He was married for two years before his wife unfortunately died at childbirth.

Finally I'd like to tell you a little story that happened in Finland. On a Sunday morning at the beginning of one summer in the 1950s there was an old gentleman who came to Kollaja-village in Pudasjärvi. He happened to meet the husband (Vilho Hiltula) of daughter of Anna's sister Aino (who was also called Anna). This old gentleman told Vilho Hiltula that he had come from America, passed Naiskangas (on the way to Kollaja) and came to Stenius. He had looked at the houses on his way and met Jaakko Ahonen (in Aappola). The man had told that he had worked at the Petäjäkangas Sawmill and he had inquired about Anna Stenius. The man was a handsome, about 75-year-old gentleman and he had worn a waistcoat with fine chain-clock. That's how Vilho's daughter Raija Niemelä remembers it.

The man had told that he had gone to America and that he had done very well there financially. He had founded a sawmill, gotten very wealthy and later married. But he had not been blessed with any children, however. The man had told that he had wanted to visit Kollaja during his journey in Finland. Nobody remembers the man's name anymore, but it has been guessed that it had been Forsman. I wonder if it was the same man whom Anna was told to have gone looking for in America?