

This post is part of 52 Ancestors in 52 weeks. Week 23 -

Dear Diary

This is a work of fiction. It is not Elsa's actual diary, but it is what I presume she would have written. I am fascinated by this story and often think about their journey.

June 21, 1910

Amerika!!

Can you imagine!

Tomorrow we will arrive in a new country!

The children wore themselves out today and are sleeping soundly. But I am so excited I cannot sleep!

What a busy and thrilling few months it has been. I remember every word of the conversation with Aunt Ebba the day we talked about making this journey. Momma was so mad! She had sent me to Aunt Ebba's house for a few days to bring them some food and to help with the children. Momma said Aunt Ebba and Uncle Victor did the best they could, but they were overwhelmed with five little children and couldn't always afford to put food on the table. It was so sad to go there and see how hungry those five little ones were. I knew my visit would help to lighten their spirits.

One evening while I was there we were talking about how at ease I was with the children. I said that having helped Momma raise four younger ones at home had taught me how. Aunt Ebba then told me that Vivi and James were going to be adopted by Aunt Ebba's sister and brother-in-law. They didn't have any children of their own and wanted to help by adopting the oldest two. Aunt Ebba cried and said it broke her heart to do it, but she knew it would help them all have a better life. She said the hardest part of this was that her sister lived in the US and she wasn't sure if she would ever see the children again.

"How will the children get there" I asked. "Well, they must go by ship but they can't go alone. My sister has sent me money for the children's fare and enough for a caretaker to travel with them. I have an idea that I want to talk to you about" she said. "You are very good with them and they love you as you do them. I want you to take them to America. You would be the adult along the way, and my sister will meet the ship at Ellis Island. After that, you could live with them and help with the children and the housekeeping."

I was speechless. Was she really asking me to leave my family and friends to move to a strange, wonderful country? My thoughts ran wild.

I don't know anyone in the United States. I have never even met by Aunt Rosa and Uncle Howard. But I would be staying with my family, and I would be with Vivi and James.

I don't speak the language. But Aunt Rosa speaks both Swedish and English. She would need to teach the children how to read, write and speak English, so I could learn at the same time.

How could I leave Mama and Papa with the four children? The children are growing quickly. Rosa was now 14, Astrea was 13, Arnold was 11 and Lennart was 9. They were hardly babies anymore. The girls were old enough to help Mama with everything.

"I will do it" I said. "But first we must talk to Mama and Papa."

Mama was skogstokig!! "I cannot believe you spoke with Elsa before asking me! You are not only sending your babies away and now you want to send mine, too?!?!" Mama, Papa and Aunt Ebba talked for a long time that night and finally agreed to it.

It didn't take long to fill out the papers and purchase the tickets. And then we were on our way to board the ship. We boarded the ship and said our tearful goodbyes to Mama, Papa, Aunt Ebba and Uncle Victor. The children cried themselves to sleep that first night. Actually, for a few nights. But we are together and have had some fun adventures on this crossing. After spending more than a month in charge of them I feel more like their mother than their cousin.

America!! The sky is beginning to brighten and soon we will be docking in New York and entering Ellis Island. I guess I have stayed awake all night thinking about what will be. When the children awake we will dress in our fine clothes and have our picture taken on the ship before we arrive in New York. And soon, the next part of our adventure begins!

I believe the picture below is of James, Rosa and Vivi and was taken while they were aboard ship. Coincidentally, this journey occurred 119 years ago this week.



*This is a re-post. I somehow deleted this from my WordPress site and only through the kindness of my cousin Crister does this post still exist. I did not have it backed up or saved anywhere else, but fortunately he did. Thanks again!!