

IRMA GREEN (1905-1988)¹

This is just a brief history of the families that went into the melting pot to make up my children's generation. I am including the things of interest that I know about.

My grandfather, Zelig Bregstone (1840-1923), lived in Lithuania. He was a son of Chaim(1806-c.1861), the oldest of seven children. Zelig was a Talmudic scholar and a teacher of Hebrew. He was married to Hannah-Rivka Pollack(1845-1927). She was 16, and Zelig, at age 22, was considered a bachelor. Hannah Rivka was one of the few girls of that time to be given an education. She had a tutor in her home who not only taught her to read and write, but also the fine arts of a lady, such as sewing, etc. (Zelig and Hannah Rivka are buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Chicago).²

Zelig's second son, my father, was named Philip Bregstone (1866-1934). He was educated in the gymnasium and then tutored sons of one of the noblemen of that area. He also taught school in Germany. Like so many Jewish boys of that period, he escaped across the Russian border and came to America so as to escape military service.

Zelig's oldest son, Henry(b.1865), was the first of his children to immigrate to America. He then sent for Philip, who arrived in 1887, and the two brothers then sent for their sisters, Esther(1871-1943) and Sarah(1879-1967). Both sisters went to work immediately. Esther worked at home for the Warsaw Brothers corset family. They then sent for my grandmother and grandfather.

Philip studied law in night school in Chicago. He received his law degree from Lake Forest Academy, and then married Anne Rosenberg. He first worked on the newspaper, The Inter-Ocean, then he went into-the practice of law. He became assistant city attorney and for eight years was assistant probate judge. He taught at Kent College, Northwestern University and Hamilton College. He was considered an authority on probate law. The Zionist Organization of America was first organized in Chicago and he was one of the organizers. He was a writer and a philosopher and a public speaker.

My mother left school at an early age and went to work for Mandel Brothers in their "bric-a-brac" department. She sold works of art there, and often made sales of several thousands of dollars. For that work she received a weekly salary of four dollars a week. She would walk to and from work, and carried her lunch. She later became interested in civic affairs and was very active in fund raising during the First World War. She was cited by Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo for outstanding services in organizing War Bond drives which resulted in Treasury sales of War Bonds. She and Philip are buried in Isaiah Israel Cemetery.

¹ Taken and edited from unpublished ms., "History of the Bregstone Family" by Irma Bregstone Green, February 3, 1960.

² Zelig died October 12, 1923, in Chicago. Hannah Rivka died July 28, 1927, also in Chicago.