



The Kouttoupes children – Chrysopi/Chrysanthe Emmanuel (married Ameras); Konstantine (Kosta) Emmanuel; Chrysopi/Chrysanthe Evangelos; Anastasia (Tasia, married Moraitis); baby Spiros Emmanuel.

## Sometime, in Saratov: Kastellorizian families in the Russian Cholera Epidemic of 1904 - 1910

by Kathryn Coutoupes

Once, a long time ago - just over a hundred years, in the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century – there were two little girls who were around the same age, with the same name, of the same family, in the same household. This was in 1912 in the city of Saratov, on the Volga River in southwestern Russia. The girls were born there to ethnic Greek parents who were Ottoman subjects from the eastern Mediterranean island of Kastellorizo.

There was still a Tsar ruling a Russian Empire. Very rich people owned very large estates - some of the largest owned by Greek Russian entrepreneurial families. The serfs who worked on them had been liberated from enslavement for just over forty years<sup>1</sup>. The revolutionary activity that would bring down Imperial Russia was ongoing. There had been an uprising

in Russia in 1905 that had forced Tsar Nicolas II to make concessions. The imperial administration was staggering on. Russia, and Ukraine were visited by cholera a number of times during the political upheavals of the previous fifty years. Riots had broken out in Saratov in response to what was seen as the Imperial government's incompetent handling of the most recent epidemic in 1910.

Construction of sections of the Trans-Siberian Railway from Moscow in the west was still underway. This would allow the journey from European Russia, through Siberia to Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan to be made entirely by train and within Russian territory. Good for trade and business. The Kouttoupes brothers would soon move their families to Yekaterinburg, the station at the western edge of Siberia.

1: The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Emancipation Manifesto". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 24 Feb. 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Emancipation-Manifesto>. Accessed 25 July 2025.

Automobile production was growing rapidly in Europe and the United States thanks to newly invented mass production and assembly lines. The first Model-T Ford had hit the road in 1908. Automatic power looms were doing the weaving. The first of the Andrews Sisters, "America's sweethearts" of swing and boogie, had been born - their father, Petros Andreas, a migrant from Greece to the USA.

People were going to picture theatres to see movies. Communication by Marconi's wireless telegraph was in use. As well as the wireless radio, long-distance telephone and switchboards. Artificial mechanical refrigeration too. X-rays and plastics had been developed. Early quantum theory was being discussed. Einstein had reservations. He was developing a theory of general relativity.

But still, infectious diseases like cholera were poorly controlled in the Russian and Ottoman Empires. While in much of Europe there had been advances in treatment and prevention – public health measure regarding clean water supply and sanitation – these eastern Empires were vast, with problematic administrations. From the mid-nineteenth century to 1925 there were several major cholera pandemics across India and the Middle East into Europe causing the deaths of some millions of people<sup>2</sup>. The increase in global trade, travel and pilgrimage also made it difficult to control the spread of the bacteria that cause cholera.

And it can be very infectious. A disease of the small intestine, it occurs if someone ingests water contaminated with infected faeces – groundwater and wells, drinking water, waterways - and food in contact with such water. It can cause diarrhoea and dehydration, shock, muscle spasms, seizures and coma. If a population of people who are infected don't receive treatment the mortality rate can be above 50%<sup>3</sup>. Poorer communities and those with badly managed water supplies and sanitation/ sewage control can be very susceptible to epidemics if the bacteria are about. And so it was in Saratov.



Cholera's usual route to Saratov was by boat, from the south and east. The city was a hub of trade, migration and rapid urbanisation. Notorious for its susceptibility to epidemics of infectious diseases, the virulence of its cholera outbreaks and the violent riots that accompanied them. There had been a disastrous outbreak in 1892. Then, eight hundred kilometres south of Saratov near the delta of the Volga River on the Caspian Sea, cholera had arrived in the Russian city of Astrakhan. People had fled to there from Baku, a city further south in coastal Azerbaijan. They brought the disease with them. Fear, suspicion of the authorities and conspiracy theories had run wild in Baku as the infection spread and people died. Riots broke out, health workers were murdered<sup>4</sup>. From Astrakhan, up the Volga River it came. This was not its first appearance in Saratov in recent decades. Nor its last. It arrived again in 1904 and stayed for several years. Up to two million people are estimated to have died in Russia during pandemics between 1865 and 1925.<sup>5</sup> Many of them in Saratov. Many survivors were orphaned.

There is a photograph of Kouttoupes children taken in a studio in Yekaterinburg around 1912, not long before Emmanuel Konstantine Kouttoupes, his wife Evdokia and their four children left Russia forever. The surroundings are sparse – a small floral carpet on the floor; on the backdrop are painted two pieces of furniture, one on each side - two dimensional vertical-lined, of weird perspective. There is to the right an ornate white wooden chair, with a curved and carved back-brace.

Baby Spiros Emmanuel sits on the chair – a cheerful one-year old, grinning and obediently sitting still in his little pale smocked dress and knee-high dark and patterned socks. The other children are standing in a line - in height and age order - to the left of him. The girls wear pale long-waisted Edwardian dresses - or long blouses and skirts? - that have modest ruches, tucks or gathers from neck to hip and gathered skirts that hang below the knee. There are ribbons in their hair. True to form, the pig-tail bows of Chrysanthe Emmanuel are slightly dishevelled, as though she has insisted on tying them herself or resisted the tying of them by someone else. She is the oldest, tallest and first in the line. A tomboy, by her own account, like her grandmother Chrysanthe/Christina Karavia who was nicknamed *To Kokino*<sup>6</sup> because of her red hair.

Second down the line, Konstantine Emmanuel (Kosta), wears a dark suit and white shirt, a jacket that seems rather large for him - with out-sized white-striped lapels and collar and calf-length trousers that sport a shiny buckle. This is a version of "the ubiquitous sailor suit"<sup>7</sup> made popular among middle and upper class Europe, Russia and the Greeks/Hellenes by the Edwardian grandchildren of Queen Victoria<sup>8</sup> and their offspring.

All four of the standing children are wearing sturdy boots and stockings and look directly and seriously at the camera. There

2: Henze, Charlotte E, *Disease, Health Care and Government in Late Imperial Russia*, Routledge, 2010

3: Sack, RB and Sissique, AK. Corpses and the Spread of Cholera in *The Lancet*, V352, Issue 9140 P1570, Niv.14 1998

4: Ryazantsev S, Smirnov A, Ryazantsev N "The Demographic, Social, and Economic Aftermath of the Cholera Epidemic in Astrakhan in 1892". Bylye Gody. 18 (4): 1982–1997 – via Cherkas Global University Press. As discussed in *History of Cholera*, Wikipedia, accessed July 2025

5: Henze. 2010

6: The Redhead

7: The Nicks, Pappas and Bogiatzis, personal communication

8: The Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna, Empress Consort of Russia by way of her marriage to Tsar Nicholas II – the last Tsar and Tsarina, executed with their children in Ekaterinburg on 17 July 1918.

may be the hint of a smile playing on Anastasia's (Tasia) lips as she rests her little hand on the chair where her baby brother sits. Her hair and ribbon very neat. How did the children of Evdokia - a Spyrides - keep still for so long?

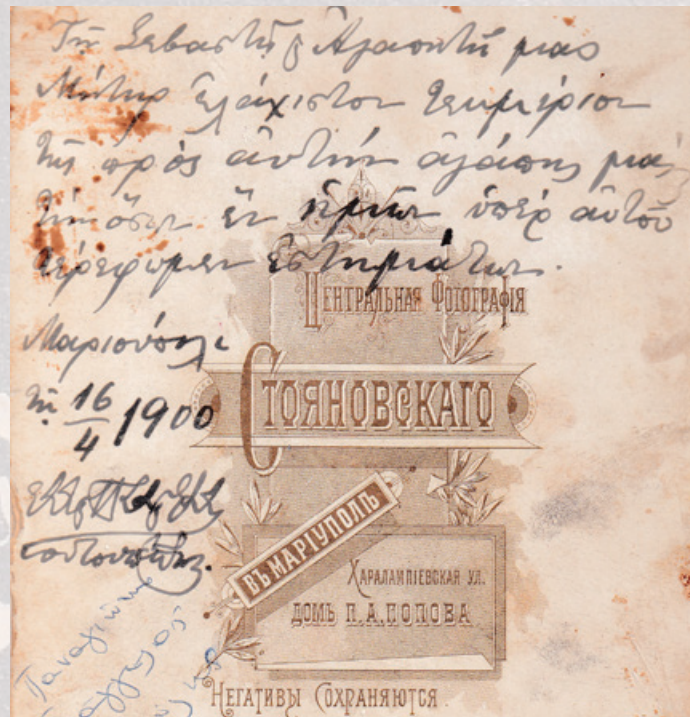
The children look well-fed, are well and warmly dressed. Chrysanthe looks sad, Konstantine bored, Tasia content and Spiros chirpy. But there is something unusual about this rather ordinary photograph of a bourgeois Greek Russian family in Edwardian dress. In the middle of the group, between Konstantine and Tasia stands a fifth child. Unlike the other four who have large dark eyes and dusker complexions, this little girl has a rounder, paler face and paler eyes. She is one of the more serious of them, a fraction shorter than Konstantine. She is around seven years old.



The Constantine Kouttoupes (Kouttoupedis) brothers, L – R: Panayiotis, Evangelos, Emmanuel (Mariopolis, Donetsk, Ukraine. April 1900).

ill, dying and the dead.<sup>11</sup> Foreigners were blamed for bringing and spreading the disease<sup>12</sup>. A neighbour reported the wife of the Greek who was lying unconscious in the snow. She was collected by the cholera patrol and taken to the quarantine hospital.

Evangelos was dismayed to find that his wife had been assumed to have cholera. The three Kouttoupes brothers – Evangelos, Emmanuel and Panayiotis - went to fetch her home. After raging at the hospital entrance and pleading, demanding that his wife be released, Evangelos was eventually allowed inside to see her, warned that if he entered then he would not be allowed to leave. And that was that. Husband and wife never seen by their family again, their bodies apparently disposed of



Inscription on back of photo.

It was the winter of 1909/10 in Saratov and there was snow about. Outdoors was freezing and it was becoming colder in the house where Nina<sup>9</sup> Kouttoupe lived with her husband Evangelos Constantine Kouttoupes, their two small children and newborn infant. Vangeli had left in the early morning and Nina was unsure when he would be home that evening. She was exhausted and the children were complaining. The fire in the stove was subsiding and the wood had almost run out. It was early afternoon and soon would be dark. She fed the baby, settled the children, and went out to get more wood from the pile at the back of the house.

She loaded the cart and was pushing it to the door when she staggered and fell. Still weakened by the recent birth and probably dehydrated, she had fainted.

There was suspicion and distrust in the city because of the pandemic and the way the authorities had managed – mismanaged<sup>10</sup> - disease controls, communications and the

in the lime pits. The newborn baby died soon after. Chrysanthe Evangelos was taken in by her uncle and aunt, Emmanuel and Evdokia; Constantine Evangelos by his uncle and aunt, Panayiotis and Christina (Pispinis).

So the fifth child in the photograph of the Emmanuel and Evdokia Kouttoupes children is indeed a Kouttoupes - orphaned by the 24-year cholera pandemic, the sixth bout to reach Saratov in recent times. Her father was one of three brothers of the entrepreneurial, ship-owning, merchant family of Kouttoupes whose base was Kastellorizo. These brothers had lived and worked together in Crimea and Russia, including The Ukraine, since their early teens. Born on the then Ottoman-ruled island of Kastellorizo in the eastern Mediterranean, of ethnic Greeks, their families had commercial and shipping interests on the Black Sea and central Russia.

When Evdokia changed the name of the 'new' little Chrysanthe to Chrysope – to lessen the confusion in the now two-

9: Evangelos' wife's first name is not remembered, but since her granddaughter was Katerina/Nina I have assumed this name for her.

10: Henze, Charlotte E, Saratov on the Eve of the Epidemic in *Disease, Health Care and Government in Late Imperial Russia: Life and Death on the Volga*, 1823 - 1914, Routledge, 2010

11: Henze, 2010

12: Kushner, A. The long history of pandemics inciting anti-Semitism, *The Forward*, May 4, 2020 <https://forward.com> › Culture

Chrysanthe household – the other Chrysanthe insisted on also being Chrysopi. And they both were Chrysopis.

By 1911 the two surviving Kouttoupes brothers had moved their business and families from Saratov further northeast to Ekaterinburg<sup>13</sup> - the major mining centre of the Empire. Gateway to Siberia and the east - a hub on the trans-Siberian route to Manchuria, China, Japan, the Americas, even Europe when battlefields made routes between east and west impassable. The families were following the market for their sesame seed, oil and halva. Perhaps also escaping the tragedy, claustrophobia and xenophobia of the pandemic stricken Saratov? But they didn't stay for long.

When they left Yekaterinburg in 1912/13 they left Russia forever and the Chrysanthe-now-Chrysopi cousins were separated. Chrysopi Evangelos is said to have been taken with her brother to other family in Egypt. Chrysopi Emmanuel settled in Athens and never again migrated. Though she did visit her three siblings in Australia, and her uncle Spiros Spyrides in Egypt in the early 1950s. Is her cousin Chrysopi Evangelos one of those in the family photos by the pyramids?

Did one or both of Evangelos' children live for a time in the Lebanon-French until 1948? There is a postcard in a family album that suggests this. At least one of the Evangelos Kouttoupes grandchildren, Leon, went to France. Had Chrysanthi Evangelos found a French husband in the Levant and settle with him in his homeland when the French administration left Lebanon in 1948? Or did she stay in cosmopolitan Egypt until many of its Italian, French, Greek and Sephardic Jewish population left in the 1950s when Pan-Arab nationalism, battle over the Suez Canal and other complex economic, social and political changes made business dealings there difficult? Did their cousin, Konstantine Emmanuel (Kosta) – having settled in Australia in the late 1920s - visit them on one of his several trips to Europe – to France, Egypt and Greece?

Kosta did visit a French family in Montpellier in 1970 and claimed their Greek Constantinople-born grandmother as a cousin. She had fled Constantinople with her mother after



*Wedding of Helene Tsakonaki and Joseph Ramond 1932, Beirut, then in Greater Lebanon under French and British Mandate.*

1922 and married a French army officer in Beirut in 1932. Her grandson, Michel - still in Montpellier - has photographs of the reunion of these Greek cousins in 1970. Is there a connection with the children of Evangelos? There is a photograph of his grandmother's wedding in Beirut that is in the Australian family album, inscribed to "M and Mme C.E. Couttoupes<sup>14</sup>". Which one? And a Greek Lebanese nephew, surname Posbic – by birth or by marriage? - visited Constantine Emmanuel in Melbourne in the 1950s. Who are all these people?

Amid the sporadic outbreaks of violence and rioting surrounding the last great cholera pandemic to reach Europe, a violence was done to the Evangelos Konstantine Kouttoupes family. By the chaotic mismanagement of the city of Saratov and regional administration. And - according to the Kouttoupes family - by a jealous and vindictive neighbour. One who was fearful and suspicious of foreigners? Caught up in the heightened atmosphere of uncertainty, helplessness and violence? Weary of the cycle of infection, illness and death? Ready to see infection, danger and conspiracy everywhere.

13: Also known as Sverdlovsk from 1924 to 1991

14: Castellorizo, now governed by Italy whose alphabet only has 'c', so the Kastellorizians (and the rest of the Dodecanese Islands) lost their 'k'

## **Kathryn Couttoupes**

Born and based in Sydney, Australia until a recent move not far south, to the Illawarra Coast. She also has strong ties with Athens, and the Lot region of south west France, having lived in both places on and off over the years. And with Kastellorizo. Her father's family were Kastellorizian Greeks, some of whom came to Australia via Russia and Greece. She has a degree in Social Work and a Masters in Adult Community Education. She has worked - in the field and in policy and planning - in community development, women's health, mental health, sexual health and HIV/AIDS, in health promotion and adult education. Also in community arts and publishing. She was raised in an Anglo-Celtic matriarchy that always valued and made her proud of her Greek heritage.

## **Make contact, share stories**

This is an extract from Kathryn Couttoupes' work in progress (*Christmas at St Kilda*) available 2027. It is a collection of short stories - of travels across six continents over five generations - based on the stories her aunts and mother told her. Also on the documents she has inherited from them, and on photographs and stories generously shared by other family members and friends, and to whom she is very grateful. If you would like to share stories or photos about the Couttoupes, Spyrides, Diamandaras, Penglis from Egypt, Stavrianos, Karavias, Pantazithis, Peretzis, Livissianos, Kallistratos, Zorbas, Grou, Kouttoupedes, Kay, Grieves, Galletis, Atikouzel, Ramond, Posbic, Tsakalakis or Condourelli families or others you know are connected, please contact Kathryn Couttoupes at [kcouttoupes@gmail.com](mailto:kcouttoupes@gmail.com)

# Images of an Early Kastellorizian Presence in Sydney

By Nicholas Pappas

Some years ago, while researching at the archives of the City of Sydney, a previously unpublished image of a scene in Park Street, in the centre of Sydney, caught my eye. Ostensibly, the photograph was of a group of labourers performing some road repairs, but closer analysis revealed something far more interesting. There, on the first-floor facade of the building known as 44 Park Street, immediately above 'Loucon's Café' and an adjoining Penfolds Wines, was a hand-painted sign. At last, here was an early image of a dedicated Kastellorizian presence in Sydney.



Loucon's Café was, of course, the coffee lounge of Nicholas Confos (Νικόλαος Αντωνίου Κουφός) who had arranged for the Brotherhood to sublease the vacant upstairs premises. After analysing the image by reference to the Association's minutes, I was able to place the photograph to c.1937 (and not 1929, as previously suggested) at which time the Brotherhood occupied the entire first floor of 44-46 Park Street. Noteworthy in this closeup is the elegant lettering of the sign and the club patron gazing casually from the window.



It was a startling find that has since gone into wide circulation and, until now, was thought to be the first (and only) pre-war image of a dedicated Kastellorizian clubhouse in Sydney.

Much to my surprise, some weeks back, I was alerted to another unpublished image by Greek Australian film maker and historian Elizabeth Kaydos. This photograph floored me. Here was a sparkling, previously unseen, image of that very same group of buildings – but much earlier.



Close examination will reveal that the club premises are only partially painted and appear to be confined to the first floor of 46 Park Street. While Penfolds Wines can again be seen occupying the ground floor, 'Scott's Fish & Oyster Café' is trading from the 44 Park Street shop premises later occupied by 'Loucon's Café'. And, unlike the sign that replaced it, the lettering here is in Greek and reads 'Καφενεῖον Το Καστελλορίζον' ('Café Kastellorizo').



In each window, in smaller letters, but in English, are the words 'Greek Club'. Though one can never be sure, this is probably the earliest image of a Kastellorizian clubhouse in Sydney that we will ever see. By reference again to Association minutes, I have been able to date the image to c.1932, a mere eight years after the formation of the Kastellorizian Brotherhood in Sydney. What is of particular interest is that the Brotherhood appears to have secured these premises prior to the establishment of Loucon's Café.

The significance of these precious images cannot be overstated, and their discovery demonstrates that we should always remain vigilant for hitherto unknown surprises from our cherished past.

- 1: Readers will forgive the mixed use of 'Kastellorizian', 'Castellorizian' etc for historical accuracy. As I wrote in *Filia* some 15 years ago, both are equally valid in English.
- 2: Upon its formation in 1924, the Kastellorizian Brotherhood was located at temporary premises at the café of Evangelos Stavrianos in Pitt Street until establishing a more permanent presence at Park Street in 1929. The Brotherhood remained in Park Street until relocating to 66 Oxford Street in 1951 where it remained until 1973.

# POSEIDON HOTEL



## Authentic Greek Hospitality

Located by the harbour, Poseidon Hotel offers its guests a relaxing stay and beautiful moments on the enchanting island of Kastellorizo. The various types of accommodation provided will meet the needs of those who wish to experience a magical escape to this unique island.



Organise with us the perfect birthday party or a beautiful and inspiring wedding event!



Our comfortable studios, suites, apartments and villas ensure an enjoyable stay.

kastellorizo-poseidon.gr | +30 22460 49212 | mob +30 6956617585



Megisti, Kastellorizo 85111(GR)  
+30 6945916904 +30 6955928967  
Kastellorizoapartments@gmail.com  
www.kastellorizoapartments.com



Megisti, Kastellorizo 85111(GR)  
+30 6945916904 | 2246049265  
Kastellorizoconstruction@gmail.com  
www.kastellorizoconstruction.com



Caught out here.

Delivered to your door.

Be one of the first to get new season "Skullies" delivered to your door.

Skull Island.

Order Skull Island prawns direct to your door.

Subscribe to our mailing list and receive 10% off your first order.



  
*Avonmore*  
on the Park  
BOUTIQUE HOTEL



In the heart of Sydney's eastern suburbs lies Avonmore, one of Australia's grandest boutique hotels. Featuring thirty sumptuous suites, Avonmore looks forward to hosting you on your next visit to Sydney.

 34 The Avenue, Randwick NSW 2031

avonmoreonthepark.com.au | (02) 9399 9388

To become a member, to advertise or for general information contact Marilyn Tsolakis,  
coordinator@kastellorizo.com

PO Box 218 Churchlands, Western Australia 6018.

[www.kastellorizo.com](http://www.kastellorizo.com)