

# Treasures from the Attic: The Extraordinary Story of Anne Franks Family



An old lady, an antiques dealer, dies in Basel, Switzerland. Her devoted daughter-in-law finally steels herself to do what all families must in the aftermath of a death - she heads upstairs to the attic to sort through the old lady's effects. But this wasn't just any old lady, and this wasn't just any old family house. Helene (Leni) Elias was born Helene Frank, only daughter of Alice Frank and sister of Otto Frank, who in turn was Anne Franks' father. The crash of 1929 destroyed the Franks' banking business in Frankfurt; the rise of the Nazi party began to destroy their lives. Alice, the matriarch, left Germany for Switzerland in the early 1930s; her four children scattered to other European capitals, but she remained the hub of their lives. They wrote (voluminously), they sent photos, they visited for summer holidays and huge family reunions, and then, of course, wrote about them when they got home. Alice was their Central Post Office and their Telephone Exchange, and she kept every bit of it she could. In wardrobes, in steamer trunks, in drawers, in boxes, in packets tied up with ribbon and string - it all sat upstairs in her house. This was the house where her son Otto, Anne's father, had come to live for seven years as the sole survivor of his little family after the liberation of Auschwitz. Such memorabilia as he rescued also went upstairs. When Alice died, her daughter Helene inherited the house. When Helene died, her son Buddy, Anne's childhood playmate, and his wife Gerti, inherited in turn. And finally Gerti went upstairs to sort out the attic....

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