My digital story is about my great-great grandfather, Nicholas Kalanick and the journey he and his family took from Ukraine to the United States. With the help of my grandfather, I was able to learn a lot about Nicolas and his story.

We start in 1920. Tensions in the Soviet Union are rising, with Lenin in poor health and the threat of instability in the region. My great-great grandfather’s family were forced to start a migration process that would last almost thirty years. In 1924, Vladimir Lenin passed away and control over the Soviet Union was taken by none other than Josef Stalin. My ancestors refused to stay in Ukraine and began their journey to America. Around a third of my relatives escaped before Stalin officially rose to power, one of these members being my great-great grandfather, Nicholas Kalanick. Nicholas, along with his wife and four children, packed their things, boarded a ship and headed off to Ellis Island. In 1921, they arrived. Along with a couple other family members, they began integrating into American society.

In 1932, one of the greatest atrocities in Ukrainian history took place, with the majority of the Kalanick family living the the Western Ukrainian city of Lviv Oblast. Holodomor, or, “to kill by starvation” when translated, was a widespread manmade famine that starved the Ukrainian people to extinguish the Ukrainian independence movement. Stalin ordered his men to restrict population movement, storm Ukrainian households, and confiscate any foods items, and to reject outside aid from other nations. It is estimated that between seven million and twelve million people, or a whopping thirty percent of the Ukrainian population, died because of this. Those in our family who survived the famine still had contact with Nicholas and their new American family. After the famine, they began to migrate to America.

Nicholas first settled in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, working for a coal mine, but disliked it so much that he moved his entire family to Brunswick, Pennsylvania and began working at a car and steel manufacturer company, which, during World War II made tanks for the American war effort. Even today, my grandfather still keeps strong ties with our family throughout the states as well as a few relatives that still reside in Ukraine. One day, my family hopes to travel across the earth and meet my distant family members that still live in a little Ukrainian town called Lviv Oblast.