

Leya Ronder's ID Card



This is the ID card of my mother Leya Ronder, issued in Kedainiai in 1919.

I was born in Lithuanian town Kedainiai [about 100 km to the west from Vilnius]. In 1920s-1930s it was a small district town. The population was a little bit over three thousands, two thirds out of which were Jews. There were strong Jewish traditions in town.

I do not know much about my ancestors. My saw my maternal grandparents only once. Grandfather Hirsh (his Jewish name was Tsvie) and grandmother Beila Bobtelski lived in a small town Naujamiestis [about 150 km to the west from Vilnius] not far from then German border. They were born in the middle of the 19th century. I do not know what grandfather did for a living, when he was young. When we came to see him, he was rather elderly and was not working. Grandmother was a housewife. They had their own one-storied house. I know that both of them died in early 1930s and without having lived to see the war, fortunately. Mother had three sisters and a brother.

My mother Leya Bobtelskaya was born in 1879. In her birth record, issued by the rabbi, Sarah Leya was written. She was always called her second name Leya. Mother went to elementary school. She could speak and write in Russian, and she practically did not know Lithuanian. Mother said when she was wooed to Kedainiai Jew Wolf Ronder, before getting married she gave her the clew of tangle threads. According to the local Jewish tradition the bride was to unravel the threads which would infer that she was patient and hard working. Mother easily coped with the task. In actuality, further on she happened to be a good wife. After getting married, mother moved to Kedainiai, where my father was living.

My father cultivated cucumbers and sold them wholesale. I do not know for sure how my parents met, but I think they had a prearranged marriage. In 1898 my parents got married in chuppah in the main synagogue of Kedainia. There were a lot of guests at the wedding, Jewish musicians. In

word, it was a true Jewish wedding.

In 1899 my eldest brother Abel was born and in 1902 -David, in 1904 - Mordechai, in 1906 - Leibl, in 1910 - Menachem, in 1912 - Benjamin, and in 1914 - the only sister Beile.

I do not know for sure at what time mother got up. At any rate it was long before the sunrise. She had to take care of livestock- chicken, turkeys, cows and horses. Besides, she took care of the husbandry. The family had equipage as well as dray horse. When I was a child, I got up very early, usually at 5-6 am and went in kitchen. By that time mother was by the stove baking bread and pies. Usually Yiddish was spoken at home. In the morning, mother used to speak Russian for me to have a good command of that language. She read me children's verses about butterflies, moths and had me memorize them.

It is hard to say how religious the family was when father was alive. When he died, mother was so busy with her chores that she probably had no time for praying. At any rate, at home she did not cover her head. I do not remember her praying. Sabbath was mark obligatorily. Usually mother went to the synagogue on Friday, having put a dressy outfit on and laced head cover. Brother and I also went there. In the evening mother lit candles. I still remember how she leaned over them and put her palms on he eyes. We had a festive dinner on Saturday- chicken stew, pies, sometimes gefilte fish. Mother tried not to do anything on Saturday. Usually some Polish lady worked. She also helped with gardening. But still, there were times when mother had to work on Saturday- to milk cows, feed poultry. Thus, she had to break Sabbath rules.