

Golda Katz With Her Mother Bluma Gass, Younger Sister Haya Gass and Her Friend



My mother Golda Katz (sitting in the center) before she got married, photographed with her mother, my grandmother Bluma Gass (sitting in the left) and her younger sister Haya Gass (standing) and her friend is on the right. I don't know her name or her story. This photo was taken in Ozarintsy in 1918.

My mother and father came from Ozarintsy town in Vinnitsa region [about 300 km from Kiev], which was Vinnitsa province at the time. Ozarintsy was one of many Jewish towns in Vinnitsa region that was within the pale of Settlement in Russia. All Jews in Ozarintsy were religious. Despite the struggle of Soviet authorities against religion the synagogue in Ozarintsy was not closed until the middle 1950s. Jews celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays and observed Jewish traditions. Of course, the time had its impact on the Jewish way of life. The generation of my grandmother wore wigs and kerchiefs and long dark clothes. Men had beards and wore hats or caps, but the following generations wore casual clothes, did not cover their heads, women did not cut their hair before the chuppah. On Jewish holidays all Jews went to the synagogue anyway. Many men went to the synagogue before work on weekdays.

My maternal grandfather's name was David Gass. My grandmother Bluma Gass died in 1919 and I did not know her. My grandfather was a tailor. My mother told me that grandmother had 9 babies, but only four survived. My mother's older brother Gershl moved to USA during the civil War and I have no information about him. Her second son Borukh was born in 1898. In 1900 my mother Golda was born and one year later - her sister Haya. Borukh studied in the cheder. My mother and

her sister had a visiting teacher, who taught them Jewish traditions and Hebrew alphabet to be able to read prayers. They were not taught to understand them since only boys were taught to translate from Hebrew. The children finished a primary Jewish school and went to study in the 7-year Ukrainian school.

After finishing school my mother and her younger sister Haya became apprentices of a seamstress. They worked as seamstresses before getting married. They made bed sheets, night gowns and women's underwear. Haya had a prearranged wedding. She married a Jewish guy from Luchentsy village of Vinnitsa region. They had a traditional Jewish wedding in the bride's home. After the wedding Haya moved to live with her husband. She was a housewife and had three daughters: Betia, Mania and Golda.

I don't know how my parents met. Since they both came from Ozarintsy where their families lived in the same street and my parents must have known each other. My parents got married in 1921. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. Mama said that there were tables installed along the street and the whole village celebrated their wedding. My parents lived with my father's parents. My grandfather had a big house. My father worked as an accountant in the kolkhoz. My mother was a housewife. My parents observed Jewish traditions, but their appearances were no different from those of Ukrainians. Men didn't have beards or cover their heads. Mama only wore a kerchief to go to the synagogue or on Sabbath and Jewish holidays.

Mama gave birth to three children. She didn't go to hospital, when the babies were due. She had an assistant doctor and a midwife assisting her delivery. I was the first child. I was born in 1922 and was named Bluma after my mother's mother and my father's deceased sister. In 1928 my sister was born. She was given the Russian name of Lubov, Jewish Liebe. In 1930 our brother Boris, Jewish Borukh, was born.