

Julia Geftman



This is my maternal grandmother Julia Geftman.

The picture was taken in I.Gezelemes studio, Sevastopol in 1875.

Mother's parents lived in Sevastopol. Grandmother Julia Geftman (I do not know her maiden name) was born in the southern Ukraine, in the town of Genichesk [near the Crimea]. I hear that many of my mother's relatives are from a hick town Genichesk.

My grandmother was very mild. She adored all her children, especially Alexander, whose death was about to kill her. From my mother's words I know that grandmother was very religious, but I do not know the details, though I displayed interest in that subject.

I do not know where my grandfather Geftman was born. Sevastopol was totally devastated after the Crimean war. There was a need in qualified people who were willing to work on revival of the city.

My young grandparents came to Sevastopol. Grandfather was clever and entrepreneurial I know that they used to change apartments moving from poorer districts to the wealthier. Their financial position improved and their family grew.

Finally they settled in a very beautiful and prestigious district of Sevastopol by historic boulevard. I do not know if my grandfather was educated, but he was very gumptions and go-getting .I do not know what he was dealing with exactly.

All I know he had something to do with construction. He came into money due to his hard work. He was known in Sevastopol for constructing there first steam mill, for the sake of which grandfather became prosperous.

Then he invested money into construction of income-yielding houses. He built a lot in Sevastopol. Even now there is a house in the vicinity of the market, built at cost of my grandfather.

He also built a good big house for his son Grisha after he got married. Grandfather built a country house in Balaklava [coastal town, outside Sevastopol] for his family. He wanted to restore a prayer house on the cemetery in Sevastopol. The building remained under constructed.

When my husband and I lived in Sevastopol after war, we saw its shambles. Grandfather started building a shrine for his family , but did not manage to finish it.

Grandfather thought that he and his kin would be buried in that shrine. He did not want to leave Russia, but things did not turn the way he expected since revolution as of 1917 was in grandfather's way.

A wealthy and entrepreneurial grandfather could see through that he would not be able to normally live and work during communist regime. That is why he quitted everything and immigrated with his family. All Geftmans left, but my mother.

My relatives did not approve of revolution. When they left they just took money, which momentarily turned into mere piece of paper. First they went to Constantinople.

Then they had a skimpy living wandering from one country to another. In the end they all happened to be in France. The entire family got together in Paris. They were not well-off, but could abide by their living. There were a lot of them and they helped each other.

My mother's entire family was rather religious except for my mother. They stuck to all major Jewish traditions, observed Sabbath, went to the synagogue during holidays, they wore mundane clothes.

Grandparents and their children strove to help out surrounding people. They always were charitable. I was told by my mother that every time before the holidays they gave dowry to the brides from poor families.

My grandfather took the most active part in it. Being so go-getting and brisk he raised such a big family. All children finished lyceums and almost all of them got higher education. Before revolution grandfather had heart problems, and his sugar was high in blood.

He was taken to Karlovy Vary and Essentuki in the Caucasus [Popular Russian resort, specializing in treatment of digestive apparatus and metabolism. There were over 20 mineral springs, used in treatment.] every year. The whole family went there. They had fun, making hoaxes and putting on pageant costumes.

Grandfather died in 1926 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Paris, France.