

Faina Gheller's Grandfather Mendel Weisman's Family



My grandfather Mendel Weisman, and his wife Basia Weisman, their children and members of their family:

My mother Bertha Rabinovich (nee Weisman) sits on my grandmother's left, my mother's first husband Michael Rabinovich stands between her and grandmother, my aunt Chava Gaitner (nee Weisman) sits on the left, her daughter Tatiana is on her lap, her husband Michael Gaitner stands behind her, my uncle Michael Weisman sits beside my grandfather, my aunt Faina (Feigele) Weisman stands beside him, behind grandfather stands my uncle Alexandr (Shneyer) Weisman, sitting on the foreground are my aunt Bella Weisman and my uncle Arkadi (Abram) Weisman.

This photo was made in Saratov in 1926 on the occasion of my mother and her first husband's visit.

My maternal grandmother Basia-Yonta Weisman was presumably born on the outskirts of Kamenets-Podolsk in Ukraine [about 1500 km from Moscow] in 1879. She came from a family with many children.

As I understood from what my aunts and mother said she was the only daughter from her father's first marriage and the rest of the children were her stepbrothers and sisters. I don't know when or for what reason her mother died.

My mother was a small child and could hardly remember her mother. My grandmother's father must have remarried shortly after his wife's death. My grandmother's stepmother was a Jewish woman.

They began to have their own children. The family was poor and to get rid of my grandmother her stepmother made her marry the first man that proposed to her: he was a lame redhead Jew that came from Austria.

I don't know any details about how my maternal grandfather Mendel Weisman, born in 1873, moved to Russia from Austria. One way or another he occurred to be there and my grandmother married him at the age of 16. They treated each other with respect.

My grandfather was 6 years older than my grandmother. He was a shoemaker in Kamenets-Podolsk.

In 1913 he was authorities forced him to move to Saratov for some suspicions that they had, but I think he was sent there due to his Austrian origin rather than any revolutionary ideas. I don't think he had any revolutionary ideas.

He was a common shoemaker and a deeply religious man. From what I know my grandmother didn't have any contacts with her family afterward and I have no information about them, therefore. I

n Saratov they lived in Nemetskaya Street (nowadays it is a pedestrian avenue in the very center of Saratov). I don't know whether they had a house or an apartment, but they didn't have any garden, that's for sure.

Grandfather had a small shoes repair shop in his street. He was a skilled shoemaker, but they his family lived from hand to mouth.

My grandmother wanted to raise his children religious, but he couldn't afford to give them good education. However, his children were taught to read and write and read religious books that they had at home.

I saw my grandfather saying a prayer every morning with his tefillin and tallit on. He took a prayer book and kept swinging to the tune of words that he pronounced. He always had a tzitzit under his jacket. He wore a hat. He had a big red beard, but no payees, I think.

My grandmother wore long skirts and long-sleeved dresses and a kerchief. She was an exemplary Jewish wife. She followed kashrut and observed all Jewish traditions. Once I attended seder in my grandparents' home.

There was a long table in their house. My strict and serious read bearded grandfather sat at the head of the table and the rest of the family were sitting by their seniority. My grandmother brought in a bowl of nicely smelling chicken broth and other dishes...

Their attitude toward the revolution of 1917 was quiet. They accepted it as something inevitable and it didn't change their way of life. People needed to have their shoes fixed regardless of the regime and besides, their family had nothing to lose.

During the Great Patriotic War they lived in Saratov. Mendel and Basia-Yonta Weisman also resided in Ufa [about 1400 km from Moscow], Chernovtsy [about 1200 km from Moscow], Zastavna [about 1150 km from Moscow] and Kuibyshev, present Samara [over 800 km from Moscow] with their daughter Chava.

They moved to their children's families to help them with raising their grandchildren. My grandfather died in Kuibyshev in 1959 and my grandmother died in Chernovtsy in 1955.

They had eight children. One of them, born in 1916, died in infancy. Their children were raised in the religious environment and were taught to observe all Jewish traditions and rules.

Their mother tongue was Yiddish. All boys were circumcised and went to cheder. Girls also studied at cheder for girls.

When they grew up and received secular education, and also, considering that they lived in the socialist countries, my mother's brothers and sisters, like the majority of Jews of their generation in the USSR gave up observing Jewish traditions.

Their families did not celebrate Jewish holidays and none of them went to the synagogue.

My mother Bertha Weisman was born in Kamenets-Podolsk in 1903. She was the first child in this family. My mother's sister Chava was born in 1904. The next was Michael Weisman, born in 1906.

He lived in Leningrad, finished a Mining College and worked as an engineer.

In 1908 Faina (her Jewish name was Feigele) Weisman was born. She married a Jewish man named Chaim Chait and moved to some place in Ukraine. She worked as an accountant, I don't know where.

My grandfather and grandmother lived with her. My mother's brother Alexadr (Jewish name Shneer) Weisman was born in Saratov in 1914. He finished an affiliate of Moscow College of Railroad Transport in Saratov in 1935 and was chief of Saratov railroad.

My mother's sister Bella (nee Weisman), born in Saratov in 1918, finished an accounting school and married a Romanian Jewish man.

My mother's brother Arkadi (Jewish name Abram) Weisman, born in Saratov in 1919, finished a Construction College.