

Sami Coyas With His Parents, Yasef And Mazalto Eskenazi Coyas



This photo was taken in the year 1924. My mother Mazalto Eskenazi Coyas is sitting on the left. Standing beside her is my father Yasef Eskenazi Coyas. You can see me, Samuel Eskenazi Coyas at 18-20 months of age being held by my father. This phot was taken at a studio in Beyoglu/Pera, called Sebah-Joaillier. On the back of the photo it says: Pera-Constantinople. My mother is pregnant here to my brother, who is to be born in January 1925. You can also see my father's chain-watch in his waistcoat pocket. My mother sold that watch many years later, when our livelihood, the sewing

machine was stolen one day when we were robbed. This had been the last relic remaining from my father and she had had to sell it to buy a new sewing machine. My mother, Mazalto Fortune Coyas [nee Amon] was born in 1863, in Daghamam, Istanbul. She was a tall, fair-skinned, and a very good looking lady. She did not cover her head. She went to the Alliance school in Kuzguncuk. She spoke French, Spanish, and Greek, and knew how to write using both the Latin and the Rashi alphabets. The Amon family settled down in Kuzguncuk when their house was burned down during the famous Daghamam fire. My mother, who was newly wed, during the time of the event, used to tell us frequently about this fire; how horrifying it was, how fast it had spread, how the people had fled in panic and didn't have time to save anything from their homes. A lot of Jewish families lost their houses in this big fire. [The Daghamam fire took place in 1921, and spread in the direction of Uskudar-Yeni Mahalle-Icadiye-Sultanbeyli, and caused 600 houses to be completely burned down]. My father, Yasef Eskenazi Coyas, was born in Haskoy, Istanbul. He worked at the Kazlicesme Leather Factory, as a blue-collar worker. He took part in the Dardanelles War (1915-1916), when he was doing his military service, and was taken prisoner by the British. He was kept under arrest for 2.5 years in London, where he had been taken. His family couldn't get any news of him, and thought that he had died. I don't have any information about the days he spent under arrest there. My father met my mother through his sister Rashel. They were distant relatives anyhow. They got married after a certain a period of time, and settled down in Yedikule. My father was continuing with his work at the leather factory while my mother was a housewife. There was a very big love between my mother and father. Unfortunately when my father died of pneumonia at a very early age in 1927 (23 Sevat 5687), my mother felt very desperate and sad. She had become a widow at a very early age with two little children, and started struggling with life. I was four, and my brother was just two years old. That's why I remember my father very vaguely. I only remember him taking me to the Bazaar in his arms. This is the only memory left in my mind related to him. My mother dressed in black for one year, and wore a black hat and covered her face with a black scarf when she went out. But her mourning lasted all her life. She always talked about our father with love and longing.