

Kati Andai's Paternal Grandmother Maria Deutsch



My father's mother at the age of 90. I knew my grandmother, Mari Perl, because she lived almost a hundred years. She was born in 1841, and I knew her. She might have had basic schooling because she could read, and she did read, mostly the prayer book. Just like a country woman. I was shocked by the fact that if she couldn't eat something she said it would be good for Mari. And the servant ate the food she left. There was nobody else but the servant. At most the farm laborer's wife helped out if needed. But she raised her daughters to be very domestic, and they knew how to cook and bake, and they made all kinds of decorated fancy-cakes and sweets when the suitors came. My grandmother was a very hard, energetic woman, but she had to be like that [in order to get on with housekeeping, the children, and the land]. I remember that she didn't have glasses,

she read the prayer book with a magnifying glass; I can still see her reading with the magnifying glass, but I could only see Hebrew letters there. I don't think she was interested in anything else. Come to think of it, though, she was interested in gossip. There was no water in the house, but there was a wash stand in every room with a washing dish and a pitcher, and a servant always made sure that there was fresh water in the pitcher. My grandmother had wonderful furniture. It was beautifully carved, and the year was on every piece, eighteen hundred and I-don't-know, forty or something. If you stepped off the porch, there was a yard, and two tiny flower-gardens (enclosed with wire-fencing) opened from there, one to the street, the other one to the yard. And at the back of the yard there was the pigsty.