

Mark And Fira Balan



These are my parents: Mark and Fira Balan, nee Korsunskaya. The photo was taken after their wedding in Mostovoye in 1919. My father was born in 1890. I don't know whether my father was raised religiously, but from what I recall, he observed no Jewish tradition. After finishing a four-year elementary school, at the age of 12 my father began to work to help his father support the family since the situation was hard. They worked for their landlord Engelgardt purchasing cattle for him. When World War I began in 1914 my father was recruited to the army. He was almost 24 years old. He served in the rear in Simferopol first. He told me that one of his duties was to stand on sentinel stock-still for two hours. If his sergeant major noticed him stir, he started his countdown anew. Later my father went to the front. He was in the army of General Brusilov. Once his regiment had to lie in hiding under the enemy's fire. My father and his fellow comrade were ordered to fetch some water. On their way back his companion was killed and my father was wounded in the neck. He was sent to a hospital in Kiev. This happened in 1916. After he recovered he returned to Mostovoye. My father never told me what he did for a living there. My mother was born in Novoukrainka in 1902. My mother enjoyed recalling her childhood. She was a healthy and cheerful girl. She could always stand for herself. Her sense of humor never failed her and she was always cheerful. My mother finished seven years of grammar school in Voznesensk. She studied well in grammar school, had an inquiring mind and was hardworking. My mother was fond of literature: she remembered poems that she learned in grammar school and often recited them to us. We liked listening to her. My mother was good at mathematics. When my brother Michael had problems doing his homework my mother helped him. She knew the Bible well and told us stories from the Bible. She wanted to become a doctor when she was a child. To enter a medical college women had to finish a school for medical nurses. My mother entered a school for medical nurses in Voznesensk in 1916. After finishing this school in 1918 she was sent to work in a hospital in Mostovoye where she met my

father. My mother told me that my father made up any excuse to come to see her in the hospital: his leg hurt or he bruised his finger or something the like. My parents got married in Mostovoye in 1919. I don't know what kind of wedding they had, but knowing my grandfather Michael's religiosity, I would think they had a traditional Jewish wedding.