

Opening Of The Monument Above The Grave Of Yankel Koppel Etkin, Rabbi Of Ostrov, The Brother Of Mira Dernovskaya's Maternal Grandfather



This is the monument above the grave of Yankel Koppel Etkin, rabbi of Ostrov, the brother of my maternal grandfather, which the family installed in 1924.

In the first row to the left of the monument sits the rabbi's wife Mina Ida with a baby in her arms. The photo was taken in Ostrov in 1924.

Uncle Yankel was also a rabbi as my maternal grandfather. He was born in Yanovo in 1854, mastered the bookbinding craft, and completed the Kovensk yeshivah.

After 1890 he moved to Pskov province, where he was a rabbi in the district center Ostrov. He was a widely educated man. Besides traditional Jewish subjects and religious duties, he was knowledgeable about natural sciences: physics, mathematics, chemistry; he was also fond of philosophy.

Uncle Yankel had collected a large library, which was handed over after his death to the Saltykov-Schedrin Public Library [today the Russian National Library] in Leningrad by his children as a gift.

Unfortunately, I don't know what books he had exactly. Yankel began to collect them when he was young, before he got married. He collected all kinds of scientific books and probably there were

also religious books as well. In this library there was a department named after Yankel Etkin.

He died of gullet cancer in 1919 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Ostrov. In 1924 the family erected a monument on his grave. The monument is crowned with a Star of David, and there is an inscription in Hebrew. A lot of people attended the unveiling of the monument, including all the relatives.

They say that his wife, Mina Ida, was a very active person, highly respected in town. They lived simply but not poorly. They had seven children, but they hired a maid to mop the floors and wash linen. Mina Ida salted herring herself, made various pickles and stocks, and baked very tasty buns, which she used to give to the synagogue.

All Yankel's children - three brothers and four sisters - were born in Ostrov. They were all beautiful and capable. They started to work at an early age, at 11-12, as accounting assistants.

When they grew up all of them left Ostrov and lived in different cities: Leningrad, Kalinin [today Tver], Sverdlovsk [today Ekaterinburg], Moscow. Only the youngest daughter remained with her parents, looking after her sick father.

Their mother died in 1927 of a heart attack and is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Ostrov.

All Etkins were quiet, self-possessed people, full of dignity. They were respected in the city, their opinion was listened to; they played a leading role in social life.