

# Mina Gomberg's Maternal Grandfather Alter-Iona Rapoport



My maternal grandfather Alter-Iona Rapoport in the 1900s when he visited his friends in Ekaterinoslav. This picture was taken at the photo studio of R. Y. Bik. My grandfather was born in 1880 in Belaya Tserkov [a small town 100 km from Kiev]. The Jewish community of Belaya Tserkov was founded in the 16th century. In the middle of the 18th century the town was one of the centers of Hasidism. Jewish families owned 230 houses by the end of the century. There were also many Ukrainian families in town. The town-people were mainly involved in commerce, selling cattle and bread. There were also a sugar factory, a tobacco factory, food factories and 250 crafts shops in town. In the middle of the 19th century the town had ten synagogues. There was a Jewish School of

Commerce and a Jewish hospital in Belaya Tserkov at the end of the 19th century. Life was good until 1905. My grandfather received some education, but I don't know where he studied. He was chief accountant at the sugar factory before 1917. He was a respected and talented man and provided well for his family. They lived in a big wooden house with two rooms, a kitchen and a hallway. They kept a housemaid. They also had a garden and a kitchen garden. They didn't keep any livestock - they could afford to buy all necessary products. They observed Jewish traditions and celebrated Sabbath and holidays. They dressed up to go to the synagogue and had nice dinners with their friends and relatives afterwards. Going to the synagogue was more of a tribute to tradition than profound faith to them. My grandfather died of typhoid in 1919 at the age of 39. We tried to find his grave in the 1950s, but there was a road built over the Jewish cemetery, and the graves had not been removed to a different location.