

Dimitri Kamyshan's Great-Grandfather Mosey Zilberberg



My great-grandfather, Mosey Zilberberg (on the left), on business in Geneva in the 1870s to negotiate obtaining loans for the construction of a printing house. He was photographed with another businessman.

Mosey Zilberberg owned a printing house in Rybnaya Street in Kharkov. Later he got some loans and built a huge printing house in Donets-Zakharzhevskaya Street. It's still located there today. During the Soviet period the printing house was named after Frunze. It's a big six-storied building, and the company publishes the majority of all Ukrainian literature.

The Zilberberg family was one of those Jewish families that took an active part in the economic development of Russia in the middle of the 19th century. They were assimilated families. They considered themselves the elite of society and people of the world free from any prejudices related to their nationality or religion. There were no christened Jews among them but quite a few Jews of their status converted to Christianity to demonstrate their loyalty and belonging to these circles. There were many such families in England, Germany and France. They were wealthy merchants and financial barons that had a solid standing in life. My great-grandfather traveled abroad and knew foreign languages. Kharkov was located outside the Jewish Pale of Settlement and Jews weren't allowed to live there, but this didn't apply to our family. My great-grandfather and my grandfather, Albert Zilberberg, were merchants of Guild I. They had expensive mansions in the center of the city, they were invited to all parties in the governor's house and attended all meetings of the merchants' assembly.