

Isaac Berkovits And His Wife Frieda Berkovits



This is my parents' wedding picture, Isaac and Frieda Berkovits. The picture was taken in Estonia in 1914. There were twelve children in Grandfather's family. Apart from my father Isaac, born on 16th April 1886, I knew only two of them: his brother Iosif and his sister Vikhne. The family was truly Jewish, which was customary for that time. Jewish traditions were kept: they went to the synagogue, observed the Sabbath and Jewish holidays at home. Yiddish was the mother tongue of my father and his siblings. The sons went to cheder. I think they got a secular education as well. From his childhood my father helped my grandfather at work; it was from him that my father learned the profession of a tailor. My father said that before the outbreak of World War I he was

drafted into the tsarist army. Even as a child, my father had an ear for music and he was admitted to the regiment orchestra. He played the trumpet and violin. Upon his return from the army, my father got married and my parents settled in Tallinn. Of course, they had a traditional Jewish wedding; it couldn't have been any other way. My mother Frieda was born in 1889. My mother's family was religious and all Jewish traditions were strictly followed. Yiddish was spoken at home. My mother was a milliner before getting married; she made very pretty hats. I don't know how my parents met. I only remember from my mother's tales that my father had wooed her for a long time, but she hesitated for some reason. In the end, they got married. After getting married both my parents worked. My mother made hats at home and my father was a tailor. They lived modestly, refusing themselves many things. With time they managed to save enough money to open a fabric store. They sold silk and woolen fabric. The store was in the downtown area, located in a thoroughfare and gradually it became prosperous. At first, my mother worked in the store as a cashier. Once the business took off, they hired workers and my mother became a housewife. My father didn't work in the store either, he hired sales assistants. The family was large and my mother had maids.