

Isroel Lempertas's Distant Paternal Relatives



These are distant paternal relatives, who died during occupation in Lithuania in the 1940s. The picture was made in Mazeikiai in the 1920s. I was born in a Lithuanian frontier town Mazeikiai, located 250 km from to the North-West from Vilnius, not far from the border with Latvia. The population of Mazeikiai was about 5-7 thousand people. Jews were about 700-800 people. There is hardly anything I know about my ancestors. Like most adolescents, when I was young, I was not interested in my past as I had to think of my education, work and family. Now, I would like to get the information on my lineage, but there is nobody I can ask about it. I know hardly anything about my father's family. I remember grandfather David Lempert lived in Latvia, in the town Daugavpils,

but I do not know if he was born there. In my father's words David was born in the middle of 19th century. Father said that grandfather David dealt with timber trade and was a rather well-off. Judging by the portrait hanging in our house, where David is with beard, with a kippah on his head and from the scares tales of my father I can say that grandfather was a religious Jew. During World War One, father's family was also exiled. In my father's words grandfather refused to live in Kharkov [Ukraine, 440 km from Kiev], where he worked in some offices of the Soviet Army. When the war was over, the family returned to Lithuania. I cannot say when grandfather David died. I think it happened before the family came back to the Baltic country. Maternal grandmother, petite lean woman, with her head always covered, lived with us. I do not remember even her name. Her health was very poor and she mostly stayed in her room in bed. We just called her grandmother. I remember her lighting candles on the Sabbath eve. She read her thick shabby prayer book while she was able to see. When I was five, i.e. in 1930, grandmother died. She was buried in accordance with the Jewish tradition in the Mazeikiai Jewish cemetery. I do not know anything about father's siblings. I think he was an only son. At least I do not remember any talks about siblings. My father Itshok Lempert was born in 1887. I do not know where he was born. Father was a very educated man. He finished lyceum and most likely some other education. Apart from mother tongue Yiddish, he was fluent in Russian. I cannot say how good was his Lithuanian, but it was definitely better than mother's. Father was exempt from the service in the tsarist army as he had myopia alta. Father was much respected in Mazeikiai. He worked as a chief accountant at the Jewish bank in Mazeikiai. He was a highly skilled accountant. He even had students. They came home to my father and he gave them private lessons in book-keeping. Apart from book-keeping and teaching, father was also involved in some social work.