

Elkhonen Saks' Father David Saks



This is my father David Saks. The photo was taken in Valga after my father returned from Austrian captivity. My father was born in 1891 and the second child in the family. He didn't obtain a good education; only completed elementary school. Later, for a few years, he helped his father, delivering goods to neighboring villages. At the age of 18 my father was drafted to the tsarist army. He served as a simple soldier, participated in World War I, and was taken prisoner at the Austrian front. He used to say that it wasn't so bad in captivity in Austria. My father spoke five languages: Estonian, Latvian, Russian, Yiddish and German. The Austrians used him as a translator in their

camp office, so he didn't have to do hard work. He even had an opportunity to go to Vienna every now and then. In Vienna he got acquainted with Austrian Jews and was treated well in their homes. He said that he could have even got married and stayed in Austria. All the same, he came back home to Estonia in 1920. Soon he got acquainted with his future wife, Haya-Hanna Saks, my mother. I think it happened in the town of Tartu at a meeting of the Jewish youth. At that time Tartu, which was a university town, was a center of both Estonian and Jewish cultural life in Estonia. It was the hometown of many Jewish students and intellectuals. The performances of the Jewish drama society in Yiddish attracted young people from all over Estonia. In general, my father was a very sociable person, able to deal with different people and find a common language.