

Sara Hudi Seiler With Her Parents



This is my mother, Sara Hudi Seiler, nee Sternschein, when she was 16, with her parents, Michael Sternschein and his wife. I don't remember her first name. This photo was taken before mother went to Germany for the first time, to her sister Grete, to have her strabismus surgically removed. The photo was taken in the garden where they lived. I think my grandparents were in their early 60s. I remember very little about my maternal grandfather. My mother told me that her father lived somewhere near Cernauti, and that he was rather well off. My grandmother - I don't remember her first name - lived in another village, and she was poor, the only child of a poor family, but she was very beautiful. My grandfather fell in love with her, and he kept going on horseback to her village, just to see her, during his courtship. After they married, she gave him beautiful children as well. My grandfather loved his family, and he adored my mother, because she was the youngest of all his children, eight years younger than his youngest son! She was just a child when all the others were

already married. My mother told me that he used to get up early, go to the market and buy her fruits; he used to put them by her nightstand, so that she would find them when she woke up. He died in 1931, when I was still a child. I remember my mother said that he died the same year my sister, Erika Esther Ellenburgen, was born. He must have been in his sixties, because he was about 42 years old when my mother was born. He died of pneumonia, he insisted on taking a bath one chilly February morning, fell ill and died soon after that. I know from my mother that he was rather religious, he observed Sabbath very strictly, he didn't work; of course he went to the synagogue on all the high holidays, and all the food in his house was kosher. His father or his grandfather, I don't know exactly, had been a *ruv* [rabbi]. I don't know what he did for a living. My grandparents were not dressed traditionally: my grandmother didn't wear a wig, and my grandfather didn't wear payes. They had their own house, but after my grandfather died, my grandmother came to live with my mother, Sara Hudi Seiler. Grandmother was already ill with sclerosis. One time she was in the courtyard, and my sister and I were playing. And she said, 'Melitta, bring me a glass of water!' And when I came back with the glass, she said to me, 'What do you want to give me, poison?' After that, Uncle Max, Max Sternschein, my mother's elder brother, took my grandmother to live with him. His children were already grown up, and he had servants; it was easier for him than it was for my mother. My grandmother died shortly after that, in her sixties, when I was three or four years old. I remember, I was in the room with my mother, and when grandmother died, my mother came to me, took off a string of red beads she was wearing and put them around my neck. She was already in mourning. My maternal grandparents had six children: the eldest was Toni [Antonia] Bernhart, there was Grete Knack, who married a German Jew, my mother Sara Hudi Seiler; and there were three brothers: Moritz Sternschein, Bernhart Sternschein, and Max Sternschein, who was a photographer in Cernauti.