

Fira Shwartz's Grandfather Itzyk Borodianskiy And His Family



From left to right, sitting are my grandmother on my mother's side Esther Borodianskaya, my mother Rosa and my grandfather Itzyk Borodianskiy. Standing are my mother's stepbrothers Samuel and Yankel. The photo was taken in Gornostaypol in 1912. My uncle Samuel took it with him. My grandfather was born in Gornostaypol, a small town near Chernobyl, in the 1860s. He came from a poor family with many children. His parents were religious and observed all Jewish traditions. My grandfather studied at cheder and at 10 he became an apprentice to a glasscutter. He worked as a glasscutter in Gornostaypol for his whole life. He owned a small shop where he received and carried out orders. My grandfather was married twice. He had two sons from his first marriage: Samuel, born in 1892 and Yankel, born in 1897. My grandfather's first wife died shortly after Yankel was born. About a year after his wife's death my grandfather remarried. His second wife, Esther, was ten years younger than my grandfather. Her family lived in Chernobyl. She came from a poor family, was the younger daughter and had no dowry. Esther was a housewife and a very nice woman. My mother, Rosa Borodianskaya, was born in 1905. My grandmother died in 1932 during the famine in Ukraine. She died before I was born, and all I know about her is what my mother told me. We also kept a photograph of her. They lived in a small wooden house in Gornostaypol with three small rooms and a kitchen. My mother took me there once when I was 5 years old. I have some dim memories of my grandparents' house. There were earthen floors with quilted rugs on them. It was dark in the rooms because the windows were very small, and there were trees around the house. There were two stoves in the house: one in the kitchen, which was used for cooking and heating one room, and one to heat the two other rooms. The stoves were stoked with wood because charcoal was too expensive at the time. The ceilings were low and whitewashed. I remember a big nickel-plate bed, in which my mother and I were sleeping during our visit. The letter 'E' was embroidered on the sheets, and my mother told me that my grandmother Esther did the embroidery. There were also woolen carpets on the walls embroidered by my grandmother. They had a garden and a kitchen garden near the house. My mother's older brothers studied at cheder. They also completed seven years of the Jewish lower secondary school

in Gornostaypol. My mother studied at secondary school for eight years. My mother's parents were religious. Her father read religious books after work. He prayed in the mornings and in the evenings. I don't know for sure whether there was a synagogue in Gornostaypol, but I believe there must have been one. Uncle Samuel told me that there were quite a few Jewish families living in Gornostaypol. My mother's family celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays. I know this from my mother's brother Samuel, who later replaced my parents.