

Sarah Pagirskaya And Her Family



The picture was made in Jewish Photo Studio on the wedding of one of our relatives in Jonava in the 1910s. It was recently sent to me from the USA by one of the relatives. In the first row standing: the fourth to the left wearing a hat and a fur piece is mother's sister Masha Granevich. Next to her in a cylinder hat is her husband Reuben Granevich. Behind them is my gorgeous grandmother Sarah Pagirskaya, she was not grey-haired yet. Her kerchief was neatly tied. Behind grandmother is my grandpa Avel Pagirskiy, young, handsome with a neat beard. Mother's sister Malka Mayzel is standing in the top row behind Granevich. I do not know the rest.

My paternal and maternal ancestors are from Latvian Jonava [about 80 km from Vilnius]. It was a small town, inhabited mostly by Jews. My maternal grandfather Aba (he was called Avel in the family, so I used to hear that name oftener) Pagirskiy was born in 1866. Avel owned a rather large house on one of the central Jonava streets. It was a solid log house, which could stand for centuries. Avel was a well-to-do merchant. He owned a large hardware store as hardware goods were in demand. Nails, horseshoes, fastenings, buckets and other inventory were mostly purchased by peasants. The store was in a five-minute walk from the river. There was a warehouse in the yard of the store as well as big scales, on which peasants used to weigh cattle. It was also income-bearing for grandfather.

My grandmother Sarah Pagirskaya, nee Krasko was born in 1865. Sarah was a rather educated woman. She could read and write in Yiddish and Russian. She spoke Polish. Her Lithuanian was not good though. Sarah ran the house as grandparents had servants. Grandmother was a tall, buxom, stately woman- a true beauty. She and grandfather had their own honored seats in the synagogue. Avel and Sarah were rather religious, trying to keep Jewish traditions. Neither grandmother nor grandpa covered their heads all the time. When they went to the synagogue, grandpa put a kippah on and grandmother wore a hat or a nicely tied kerchief. Grandpa had a modern beard- short and neat. Avel and Sarah often went abroad on vacation. As a rule they went to Karlovy Vary (at that time that resort was called Karlsbad). Grandpa had problems with stomach. He was recommended by doctors to drink healing water every year. In 1935 Avel was operated on in Königsberg -he had a carcinoma behind his ear, which looked like a big plum. It was a malignant tumor, so grandpa

lived only for a year after operation. In 1936 he passed away.

Sarah and Avel Pagirskiys had ten children. All of them got an excellent for those times education in lyceum. They were literate and cultured people. When children grew up, they were not religious, like their parents merely sticking to the traditions and marking Jewish holidays.

My mother's sister Masha married a Jew Reuben Leib Granevich. I do not know what he did for a living, but he was rather well-off. Reuben Leib died several years before the outbreak of Great Patriotic War. Masha, being single by that time, remained in the occupation. She had lived in Kaunas ghetto and in 1944 she was sent to Nazi concentration camp Stutthof along with the group of Jewish women. My aunt died there. Masha had three daughters.

Mother's sister Malka was born after Frida in 1891. She married a man from Vilnius- Lipman Maysel and they lived in Vilnius with their children- son Efraim and daughter Miriam (we called her Mika). Mother had not seen her sister for a long time, when Vilnius belonged to Poland. We went to see Malka as soon as Vilnius again became the capital of Lithuania in 1939. We saw each other rather often before war. Unfortunately aunt Malka, her husband and Miriam did not manage to get evacuated. Malka, Miriam and Lipman perished in Vilnius ghetto.