

Olga Bernstein's Mother Slava Bronfein



My mother Slava Bronfein. This photo was taken on the occasion of visiting Kiev in 1914.

My mother's parents lived in Kopachiv village Obukhov district near Kiev [about 60 km from Kiev]. There were few Jews in the village. Its residents were Ukrainian for the most part. Ukrainians and Jews got along well and treated my grandfather with great respect. I don't know when or where my grandfather and grandmother met or any details about their wedding. My grandfather David Bronfein was a tailor. I believe he was born in 1870. I don't know who his parents were. He made

sheepskin coats for villagers. I didn't see my grandfather going to the synagogue, but he had a tallit, white and black, and tefillin, every now and then he had them on to pray, but I don't think he did systematically. Grandmother Fenia was a thin tall woman, born around 1869. She gave birth to babies and raised them, this was her job. My grandmother had 14 children, all born in Kopachiv. Many died at birth or in infancy. Seven children survived.

My mother Slava Bronfein was the oldest in the family. She was born in 1890. She didn't study anywhere and from the age of 10 she used to sit in my grandfather's shop assisting him with hemming skirts, corsets and shirts. She learned from grandfather and became a dressmaker.

The village was small and there were no distinct prospects for them. In 1913 my mother moved to Kiev and got married there and her parents decided for moving there as well. The family lived in Stalinka, a district in the suburb of Kiev at that time, one of its central districts at present; this district was like a village where everybody knew everyone else. Many of my relatives resided in the same street.

My mother was tall and beautiful. She was the first one to take a decision to move to Kiev in 1913. She rented an apartment in Stalinka in Kiev and her family followed her. My mother was a very popular dressmaker in Stalinka. In 1914 she married David Bernstein, my father. I don't know how they met or what kind of wedding they had.

As far as I can understand he met my mother via matchmakers. My mother had just come from a village, she was the oldest daughter in the family and was single. Although she was beautiful, she had a hearing problem. And my father's problem was that he was short and humpbacked, but they cared about each other and had a good life together.