

Monument In Kamyen Shtetl On The Grave Of Jews Executed By The Nazis



This is a photograph of the monument erected after the end of the war in memory of 177 Jews executed by shooting in 1941.

It is situated in Kamyen shtetl in Belarus (Vitebsk region), where Avraham Shukhman, my grandfather was born in 1871. He was among those Jews who were shot there on the 17th of September 1941.

The photo was taken in summer of 2003.

They said that my grandfather had a large house, he was a partisans' messenger and they used his house as a safe one. Germans arrested him and tortured terribly.

They said, Germans torn out hair from his long beard and then shot him. Before the WWII my grandfather was an excellent shoemaker. I know that he worked in co-operative and he was doing well.

He had many [seven] children. They kept hens, four cows and geese too. Every child had his own responsibility: one took care of cows, the other took care of geese and turkeys. There were no assistants except for the children.

Elder children helped to bring up the small ones. Avraham's wife died during intervention, during invasion of Poles [In April 1920 Poland entered the war against Soviet Russia.

In 1921 according to peace negotiations in Riga, Poland received a significant part of Ukraine and Belarus. Final event of the war was a defeat of the interventionists]. I do not know the year of her birth, and neither do my sisters.

She died in 1919 from typhus. My mum told that she cried a lot, but nobody could help her. They were hiding from Poles and from intervention. At that time Germans and Poles came there changing each other. All of them plundered their place, and nobody could help.

My grandmother died, when my mum was 9 years old, and her younger brother was 6. My mum was the next to last child in my grandfather's family.

My grandparents spoke only Yiddish. Grandmother (I do not remember her name) was the last person in our family who spoke only Yiddish, all the rest knew Russian. Grandfather did not get married for the second time: he loved his children very much and devoted his life to them.

Mikhail wanted to become a professional soldier very much (like his grandfather and my father: I told him a lot about my father). Being not indifferent to the destiny of his grandfather (my father), he searched for information about him.

He also got information about Efim, mother's brother, who was lost in Kirov district of the city (at the heights) and was buried there. It was Mikhail who pressed the regional military registration and enlistment office for his burial.

My son visits Kamyen shtetle in Belarus every summer. He found the foundation of the house where the family of Avraham Shukhman, his great-grandfather lived. He spoke to people who live next door and even received from them some household goods that belonged to Avraham's family.

My son took a photograph of this monument. The following text is written on it: Comrade, take off your hat to the memory of the 177 lost Soviet citizens shot by Fascist executioners in Kamyen shtetle on the 17th of September 1941. May their memory live forever.