

The Renovated Building Of The Kerch Synagogue That Rimma Leibert's Mother's Parents Went To



I took this photo in my mother's hometown of Kerch - the renovated street with cypress trees in the Moorish style and the renovated building of the Kerch synagogue that my mother's parents went to.

My grandfather Abram, born in 1880, went to study vocation after finishing cheder. He became an apprentice of a blacksmith. Grandfather Abram was also a big strong man and did well in his vocation. Abram married Riva, a Jewish girl, and this is all I know about my grandmother. After the wedding the newly weds moved to Kerch town in the Crimea, in the east of the Crimean peninsula, where my grandmother's distant relatives lived. This town recently celebrated the 2600th anniversary of its foundation. It was founded by ancient Greeks and was called Panticapea. There was a big fish and trade dock in Kerch. The population dealt in fishing and fish industries. The population was Russian, Ukrainian, Greek, Turkish, Crimean Tatar, Karaim and Jewish, of course. The Krymchaks and Karaims belonged to the Judaic faith like Jews. There were Christian churches, a Muslim mosque, six synagogues, a Karaim kinasa and a Krymchak synagogue in Kerch. There was a Jewish school for boys and girls in the town. The biggest synagogue was attended by Jewish doctors, lawyers and wealthy merchants. There were two synagogues for the military: there was a garrison in Kerch. One was for officers and another one - for soldiers. There was a craftsmen's synagogue and two smaller synagogues. My grandfather Abram went to the craftsmen's synagogue on Friday, Saturday and Jewish holidays.

In 2002 I visited Kerch, my mother's hometown. I was struck by its contrasts: ruined plants and mines, half-ruined dock and the shining sea, ancient fortresses and plundered burial mounds. It will take time and effort to make Kerch and Ternopol developed town. What else struck me in Kerch was the reconstructed synagogue in a beautiful street with young cypress trees, nice Hessed and the Jewish community. This wasn't possible during the Soviet rule, and I am happy that the Jewry

has revived in my grandfather and mother's hometown. I also went to the common grave outside the town where my grandfather and his family perished. The community installed a modest monument on the spot where the Jews of Kerch were killed (later Krymchak and Karaim people were killed here), where the mortal remains of my kin lie.