

Ida And Efrayim Kaplan



These are my parents, Ida and Efrayim Kaplan. My father was much taller than Mama, and the photographer asked him to sit down, while Mama was standing. I remember the dress she was wearing. It was a black and brown velvet dress. It was very becoming, and Mama liked it. This photo was taken in Aluksne in 1916.

After the wedding my parents settled down in Aluksne, Latvia. My parents rented an apartment. The tsarist laws did not allow Jewish residents to build or own houses or any real estate property. Anyway, our family was doing well, and we could afford to rent 4-5-room apartments. In Aluksne my father went to work for the leather/fur factory. The factory was in another town, and my father was to supply raw materials there. There was a forest starting at the boundary of the town, and there were foxes, squirrels and hares in the woods. Hunters were not required to obtain special permits. My father bought skins from hunters. He was well-respected for his decency. He never tried to get down the price. Hunters trusted him and willingly worked with him. When there were sufficient skins, my father shipped them to the factory by train. My father was doing well. Mama was a housewife. We had a good childhood. Our father provided well for us.

When our family moved to Aluksne, there were 20-25 Jewish families living in the town. There were no synagogues or prayer houses. Jews didn't get together for prayers. They prayed in their homes. When my father's business improved, he rented a house to make a prayer house in it. Since then Jews came for a minyan to pray in the house. My father also bought a handwritten Torah and gave it to the community. It was kept in the prayer house. My father was a kohen, head of the Jewish community. My father took on the rabbi's responsibilities. He organized a cheder for boys. He contributed a lot to the community and was well-respected for it. People said that they had finally

started living like Jews, thanks to my father. Jews in Aluksne still remember my father and say many good words about him. Latvian residents respected him a lot as well. He was very honest and never used receipts or acquittance in his business. His word was enough, people said, when giving him money. He always followed the terms of payment, and there were no delays. If somebody had a problem, he asked my father to mediate for him, and my father managed this mission well. He was very kind, and he never refused to help people, when they needed it. People never said anything but good things about him.

My father dressed like any other religious Jew. He wore black suits and a black hat. He had beautiful thick black hair and a neatly cut moustache. I remember asking him once why he always wore a hat and he replied that he wanted his children to know that he was a Jew and that they were Jews too. My mother was very beautiful and liked to dress up. She wore dark brown or chestnut color dresses. They suited her well. Her clothes were cut to fashion. She didn't wear a wig. She had beautiful thick dark chestnut hair which was always nicely done. She backcombed it above her forehead and wore it in a knot at the back of her head. When going out, my mother wore a normal or fur hat, according to the season. She had lovely hats. She wore a nice heavy silk shawl to go to the prayer house.