

Yasef Eskenazy Coyas



This is a photo that my father, Yasef Eskenazi Coyas, had taken before he went to military service. He is here with a friend of his at a “coffee house”, smoking their nargiles, drinking their coffees and playing backgammon. This is the final periods of the Ottoman Empire. The men are still wearing the fes. In those times, it was customary for the men to spend their free time at coffee houses; in fact this tradition continues even today. This is probably the garden of a coffee house located at Yedikule, the district they used to live in. According to what my mother told me, the one with my father was a very good friend of his who used to make ice-creams; but I do not know his name. In this photo, my father is not married yet and his family has not dispersed as a result of immigrations. His father Samuel Eskenazi Coyas is working as an accountant at the Kazlicesme Leather Factory. My father, Yasef Eskenazi Coyas, was born in Haskoy, Istanbul. He worked at the Kazlicesme Leather Factory, as a blue-collar worker. He took part in the Dardanelles War (1915-1916), when he was doing his military service, and was taken prisoner by the British. He was kept under arrest for 2.5 years in London, where he had been taken. His family couldn't get any news of him, and thought that he had died. I don't have any information about the days he spent under arrest there. My father met my mother through his sister Rashel. They were distant relatives anyhow. They got married after a certain a period of time, and settled down in Yedikule. My father was continuing with his work at the leather factory while my mother was a housewife. There was a very big love between my mother and father. Unfortunately when my father died of pneumonia at a very early age in 1927 (23 Sevat 5687), my mother felt very desperate and sad. She had become a widow at a very early age with two little children, and started struggling with life. I was four, and my brother was just two years old. That's why I remember my father very vaguely. I only remember him taking me to the Bazaar in his arms. This is the only memory left in my mind related to him. My mother dressed in black for one year, and wore a black hat and covered her face with a black scarf when she went out. But her mourning lasted all her life. She always talked about our father with love and longing.