

Sami Coyas With His Mother Mazalto Eskenazi Coyas



This photo was taken in 1923, the year I was born. You can see me, barely five to six months old, on my mother's lap. I am my parents' first child. My brother Izak was born two years after me in 1925. We lived in Yedikule then. This photo might have been taken in the street or in the garden of our house. You can see that my mother dressed me in a long dress even though I am a boy, but I understand this was common practice at the time. My mother, Mazalto Fortune Coyas [nee Amon]

was born in 1863, in Daghamam, Istanbul. She was a tall, fair-skinned, and a very good looking lady. She did not cover her head. She went to the Alliance school in Kuzguncuk. She spoke French, Spanish, and Greek, and knew how to write using both the Latin and the Rashi alphabets. The Amon family settled down in Kuzguncuk when their house was burned down during the famous Daghamam fire. My mother, who was newly wed, during the time of the event, used to tell us frequently about this fire; how horrifying it was, how fast it had spread, how the people had fled in panic and didn't have time to save anything from their homes. A lot of Jewish families lost their houses in this big fire. [The Daghamam fire took place in 1921, and spread in the direction of Uskudar-Yeni Mahalle-Icadiye-Sultanbeyli, and caused 600 houses to be completely burned down]. 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.