

Avel Pagirskiy And Boris Shlapoberskiy



This is my grandfather Avel Pagirskiy (to the left) and the husband of my mother's sister Frida - Boris Shlapoberskiy. The picture was made in Karlsbad (Czech) in 1926 during vacation on the spa, where grandparents and other members of our large family used to go.

My paternal and maternal ancestors are from Latvian Jonava [about 80 km from Vilnius]. It was a small town, inhabited mostly by Jews. My maternal grandfather Aba (he was called Avel in the family, so I used to hear that name oftener) Pagirskiy was born in 1866. Judging by the family tree, grandfather had a lot of siblings. But all of them most likely had died long before I was born. At any rate there is nothing I know about them.

Grandpa Avel owned a rather large house on one of the central Jonava streets. It was a solid log house, which could stand for centuries. Avel was a well-to-do merchant. He owned a large hardware store as hardware goods were in demand. Nails, horseshoes, fastenings, buckets and other inventory were mostly purchased by peasants. The store was in a five-minute walk from the river. There was a warehouse in the yard of the store as well as big scales, on which peasants used to weigh cattle. It was also income-bearing for grandfather. Elderly Jew Avrumke worked with the scales. He also was slightly mistaken saying that the weight was less than the scales showed. Then perturbed peasants went to complain of him to grandpa and he tried to find out, who was right. Avrumke used to say that the cow had much to eat, so there was a lot of food in its stomach. The food would be released soon, therefore he considered that factor in the weighting. No matter how grandpa scolded Avrumke, he always did what he wanted. Apart from Avrumke other people worked for my father-some in the store and several in the warehouse.

Avel's wife, my grandmother Sarah Pagirskaya, nee Krasko was born in 1865. Sarah had sisters. I just know their names from family tree. I had not known them. Sarah was a rather educated woman. She could read and write in Yiddish and Russian. She spoke Polish. Her Lithuanian was not good though. Sarah ran the house as grandparents had servants. Grandmother was a tall, buxom, stately woman- a true beauty. She and grandfather had their own honored seats in the synagogue.

Avel and Sarah were rather religious, trying to keep Jewish traditions. Neither grandmother nor grandpa covered their heads all the time. When they went to the synagogue, grandpa put a kippah on and grandmother wore a hat or a nicely tied kerchief. Grandpa had a modern beard- short and neat. Avel and Sarah often went abroad on vacation. As a rule they went to Karlovy Vary (at that time that resort was called Karlsbad). Grandpa had problems with stomach. He was recommended by doctors to drink healing water every year. In 1935 Avel was operated on in Königsberg -he had a carcinoma behind his ear, which looked like a big plum. It was a malignant tumor, so grandpa lived only for a year after operation. In 1936 he passed away.

Sarah and Avel Pagirskiys had ten children. All of them got an excellent for those times education in lyceum. They were literate and cultured people. When children grew up, they were not religious, like their parents merely sticking to the traditions and marking Jewish holidays.