

Hesse Tsivian



This photograph shows my mother, Hesse Tsivian, nee Heiman, after returning to Estonia from Warsaw. It was taken in Tartu in 1912. I do not know if my mother's parents were born in Estonia or if they moved here. At the end of the 19th century they were already living in the city of Tartu. My grandfather's name was Tevye Heiman, and my grandmother's name was Rohel-Leah Heiman [nee Klas]. Grandfather Tevye traded in cattle. He went around Estonian villages. During one of these trips, my grandfather was attacked by robbers and killed. This happened in the mid-1900s. My grandmother had twelve children, eight of whom survived. Yiddish was the language spoken within the family, but every one of the children could speak Russian, Estonian, and German. The family closely observed Jewish religious traditions. Grandmother Rohel-Leah was very hard-working. Her hands were remarkably skilful - whatever household work she took up was done perfectly. This trait of hers was passed on to all of her children and to many grandchildren. Every one of grandmother's daughters could sew and embroider well; they could cook delicious meals and create a general feeling of coziness in the house. My mother's family was a united one; her sisters and brothers supported each other during their whole lives. My mother was born in 1895 in Tartu. She was the youngest child and the favorite in the family. When Grandfather Tevye died my mother was 12 or 13 years old, and the elder siblings helped my grandmother to bring her up. For a few years my mother studied in some school in Tartu. When she was 15 she went to Warsaw to study sewing. My mother studied there for two years in a school that trained tailors of top qualification. She had a certificate confirming her graduation from that school, it was later posted on a wall in my mother's workshop. In 1912 my mother returned to Tartu.