

Mihaly Mestitz



This is my paternal grandfather, Mihaly Mestitz. The picture was taken in Marosvasarhely in the 1900s.

Of my grandfather I only know he was a good-looking old man. He was born in 1830 and was originally from Bohemia, from a town called Raudnitz. I don't know why he came here, but I believe he was very young at the time. His name was originally Mertitz. He changed it slightly because

Czechs pronounce 'r' as 's', and it seems he wrote it with an 's' instead of an 'r' when he came here. At that time, it was the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. [Editor's note: The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy came into being in 1867. Before this date both the Czech lands and Transylvania belonged to the Habsburg Empire.] I don't know anything about his education, nor where he lived, apart from Marosvasarhely. I only know that in 1850 he had a furniture store on the corner of the street formerly called Szentgyorgy Street [currently Revolutiei Street, downtown]. The store was called Mestitz Mihaly es fiai [Mihaly Mestitz and Sons]. A child never asks about these things, you know, she only overhears them, so I don't know too much about these things. From 1869 he operated a floorboard factory, a steam sawmill and a steam mill.

They must have been financially well off, since he was the first furniture manufacturer in Transylvania. My grandfather had to be a very forward-thinking man, as he advertised his furniture store. They were suppliers to the royal court. 'The cheapest place to buy furniture, the biggest furniture factory in Transylvania, Mihaly Mestitz and Sons: Szecsenyi Square, Marosvasarhely, and Unio Street, Kolozsvar. We only sell top quality products, and we provide the longest warrantee for them. Enormous supply of housewares, a wide range of Persian rugs.' This is an ad from 1860-1870. Someone found it in a book and photocopied it for me. They won the golden award, in any case the top award, at furniture exhibitions in Vienna, Budapest and in Spain, I think in Barcelona.

By the time I was born, our family only owned three houses, but some say the Mestitz family used to have 21 houses in Marosvasarhely. I believe my grandfather probably invested his money in real estate, and when he opened the furniture factory, he sold the houses. I don't know where he got all that money from, but I do know that his name is on the marble tablet by the synagogue, amongst the names of people who donated money to build it. His mark is still visible on one of the benches. Back then all Jews observed religion, but I don't think my grandfather was all that religious. All his children were born in Marosvasarhely. My dad was the youngest child of eight, and he was still very young when his father died. He never really talked about him. My grandfather died in 1909, three weeks before my older brother was born.