

Michael Sternschein



This is my maternal grandfather, Michael Sternschein, my handsome grandpa, as I used to call him. I don't know when the photo was taken, but you can see he was not so young anymore, maybe in his 60s, I don't know. Uncle Max Sternschein probably took the photo because he had a photo studio and he would take pictures of anyone from the family who came to him. I remember very little about my maternal grandfather. My mother told me that her father lived somewhere near Cernauti, and that he was rather well off. My grandmother - I don't remember her first name - lived in another village, and she was poor, the only child of a poor family, but she was very beautiful. My grandfather fell in love with her, and he kept going on horseback to her village, just to see her, during his courtship. After they married, she gave him beautiful children as well. My grandfather loved his family, and he adored my mother, because she was the youngest of all his children, eight years younger than his youngest son! She was just a child when all the others were already married. My mother told me that he used to get up early, go to the market and buy her fruits; he

used to put them by her nightstand, so that she would find them when she woke up. He died in 1931, when I was still a child. I remember my mother said that he died the same year my sister, Erika Esther Ellenburgen, was born. He must have been in his sixties, because he was about 42 years old when my mother was born. He died of pneumonia, he insisted on taking a bath one chilly February morning, fell ill and died soon after that. I know from my mother that he was rather religious, he observed Sabbath very strictly, he didn't work; of course he went to the synagogue on all the high holidays, and all the food in his house was kosher. His father or his grandfather, I don't know exactly, had been a ruv [rabbi]. I don't know what he did for a living. My maternal grandparents had six children: the eldest was Toni [Antonia] Bernhart, there was Grete Knack, who married a German Jew, my mother Sara Hudi Seiler; and there were three brothers: Moritz Sternschein, Bernhart Sternschein, and Max Sternschein, who was a photographer in Cernauti.