

Berta Kovalski



This is my aunt - mother's sister Berta Kovalski. The picture was made in Ukrmerge in 1910s before departure to Canada. The photo was given to my mother.

My mother's maiden name is Yashinskaya. Her father, my maternal grandfather Iechiel Yashinskiy was born in 1850s in some Lithuanian town. I do not remember its name. I do not know who his parents were. All I know is that the family was very religious. Grandfather went to cheder, eshiva, and then entered rabbi school. I do not know whether the latter school was. I assume it was in

Panevezys. During the studies Iechiel Aria understood that rabbis were usually very poor, depending on the community and parish, who pay for their maintenance. He saw them wearing one and the same clothes all the time, their wives barely scraping through, their children wearing hand-me-downs. Right before finishing school, before taking final exams, Iechiel refused to become a rabbi. He decided to be a craftsman. He became an apprentice of one very good tailor and agreed with him that he would pay for accommodation, meals and training after starting making money. My grandfather's teacher turned out to be a very decent man and when grandfather became a tailor he took no money from him. Besides, he gave good clothes to grandpa and money to start business. In a year or two grandpa had his own tailors' workshop, where about 8 people were working. Dad said that he paid the ladies with gold as they were going to save it for their children's training or weddings, and men were paid money.

Soon Iechiel Aria married my grandmother Leya. She was born in Dublin, the capital of Ireland and spent her childhood there. When she turned 15 or 16, her family moved in Lithuania. I do not exactly know where they grandpa and his young wife got settled. It was a small town, located not far from Ukmergė. Here they had lived for many years. Grandfather had tailors' business, and grandmother raised children according to Jewish traditions. There were ten of them and every year or a year and a half a new baby was born. In 1920s grandparents moved to Ukmergė, where they lived to see the Soviets come to power, and then the beginning of Great Patriotic War and occupation. They died here during one of the first actions in summer 1941.

Mother's sister Berta, who was two or three years younger than my mother, was very beautiful. She married a musician, a Jew with Polish name Kovalski. It was a love wedlock. They left for Canada to Chaya. Berta had two daughters. One of them Sarah recently wrote letters to us. I cannot recall when Berta died. She had a long and happy life.