

Olga Bernstein's Grandfather David Bronfein



My grandfather, my mother's father David Bronfein. This photo was taken by an amateur photographer in Kiev some time in the 1930s.

My mother's parents lived in Kopachiv village Obukhov district near Kiev [about 60 km from Kiev]. There were few Jews in the village. Its residents were Ukrainian for the most part. Ukrainians and Jews got along well and treated my grandfather with great respect. I don't know when or where my

grandfather and grandmother met or any details about their wedding. My grandfather David Bronfein was a tailor. I believe he was born in 1870. I don't know who his parents were. He made sheepskin coats for villagers. I didn't see my grandfather going to the synagogue, but he had a tallit, white and black, and tefillin, Every now and then he had then on to pray, but I don't think he did systematically. Grandmother Fenia was a thin tall woman, born around 1869. She gave birth to babies and raised them, this was her job. My grandmother had 14 children, all born in Kopachiv. Many died at birth or in infancy. Seven children survived. The children were growing up and the village was small and there were no distinct prospects for them. In 1913 my mother moved to Kiev and got married there and her parents decided for moving there as well. The family lived in Stalinka [a district in the suburb of Kiev at that time, one of its central districts at present]; this district was like a village where everybody knew everyone else. Many of my relatives resided in the same street.

My mother's youngest brother Yefim Bronfein was born in 1910. In 1914 he moved to Kiev with his parents and other brothers and sisters. He worked as logistics manager in a hospital. Grandmother and grandfather Bronfeins lived with us until 1941. I remember my uncles Yefim and Hatskel always arguing about something during family gatherings. One of them was devoted to his ideas and another one thought ideas were nothing and didn't like the Soviet regime in general. Hatskel used to say: 'You are a communist! And I want to trade and I deal in it and provide for my family! And you will be as poor as the rest of them!' Their parents were very upset about their quarrels. I remember my grandfather's 70th birthday celebration before the Great Patriotic War. The difference in age between his oldest grandson and the youngest granddaughter was 24 years. My 25-year-old brother greeted him holding his one-year-old sister Sopha.

My grandmother and grandfather Bronfeins didn't want to evacuate in 1941, but they had left Kiev. They died in Siberia, but they died from old age.