

Mark And Fira Balan



These are my parents: Mark and Fira Balan, nee Korsunskaya. The photo was taken in Odessa in 1920 shortly after my parents moved to Odessa. When World War I began in 1914 my father was recruited to the army. He was almost 24 years old. He served in the rear in Simferopol first. He told me that one of his duties was to stand on sentinel stock-still for two hours. If his sergeant major noticed him stir, he started his countdown anew. Later my father went to the front. He was in the army of General Brusilov. Once his regiment had to lie in hiding under the enemy's fire. My father and his fellow comrade were ordered to fetch some water. On their way back his companion was killed and my father was wounded in the neck. He was sent to a hospital in Kiev. This happened in 1916. After he recovered he returned to Mostovoye. My father never told me what he did for a

living there. My mother wanted to become a doctor when she was a child. To enter a medical college women had to finish a school for medical nurses. My mother entered a school for medical nurses in Voznesensk in 1916. After finishing this school in 1918 she was sent to work in a hospital in Mostovoye where she met my father. My mother told me that my father made up any excuse to come to see her in the hospital: his leg hurt or he bruised his finger or something the like. My parents got married in Mostovoye in 1919. I don't know what kind of wedding they had, but knowing my grandfather Michael's religiosity, I would think they had a traditional Jewish wedding. After the wedding the newly-weds spent some time with my mother's parents in Novoukrainka. Grandmother Leya made my mother a very valuable wedding gift: a feather mattress that my mother kept until she died. After a few months, in 1920, the newly-weds moved to Odessa. At first they lived on Chicherin Street in the center of the town, but it turned out to be very cold and they moved to another apartment in Nezhynskaya Street in the same part of the town.