

Gusta Keiner



This is my grandma, Gusta Keiner, sometime in the 1920s. The photo was taken in Cracow.

My father's family came from Wadowice, a small town not far from Cracow. It was there that my grandfather, Adolf Keiner, was born. My grandmother's name was Gusta. Unfortunately I can't recall Grandma Keiner's maiden name, but I do know that she was born in some other small town in Galicia and only moved to be with her husband in Wadowice after her marriage. I can't give any precise dates, but I think that both my grandparents were born in the 1860s, and that they married

in the 1880s, because their elder son Samuel was born in 1889.

I can't say much about their life in Wadowice, because I didn't visit them there. In the 1920s they decided to move to Cracow. In Cracow the Keiners lived on Zielona Street, now Sarego. The name of the street was changed in the 1930s. Grandma kept house and Grandpa opened a tiny shop selling cleaning agents on Mikolajska Street, but he was barely able to make ends meet. They lived in terrible poverty - there were an awful lot of traders in Cracow, Grandpa did hardly any business, and in the end he closed the shop down. They probably lived off savings. They led a below-average existence, with absolutely no high points, no servants, holidays, etc.

I remember that apartment of theirs on Sarego Street a little - small, dark, two little rooms and a kitchen I think, although there certainly would have been a bathroom with running water. I remember that when I went to visit my grandparents, Grandpa Adolf would give me a little bar of Elida soap as a present.

My grandparents knew Yiddish, but they spoke Polish between themselves. I have no idea what their political convictions were. They are sure to have had a religious wedding and to have been registered in the kile, but on the whole they weren't particularly religious, although they respected tradition. They both dressed in the European fashion, Grandma didn't wear a wig, and they didn't keep kosher. Twice a year, at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, they went to one of the synagogues in Kazimierz. Grandpa certainly knew all the Jewish prayers - he was taught in childhood - and in childhood my grandparents would definitely have observed the kashrut, but later on they no longer did. This was the area where Polish culture and Jewish culture met, though there was no question of them trying to blur their origins.

Grandma and Grandpa Keiner had two sons, Samuel, born in 1889, and Ferdynand, born in 1893.