

Isaac Rotman's Maternal Grandmother



This photograph was taken in 1880s at one of the photo studios of St. Petersburg. Unfortunately I do not remember where it was situated, but I remember my mother saying that grandmother was taken to the most fashionable and well-known photographer.

My maternal grandmother and grandfather lived in Staraya Ladoga. I used to spend time at them several years running. My grandfather was an owner of bakery, he made bread and sell it. Soviet authorities liquidated his bakery and grandfather himself, too. I do not remember details, but grandmother came to Petersburg soon after the Revolution and lived at us. She spoke poor Russian, did not tell fairy tales. On the whole she did not become a grandmother for us in full sense of this word.

They had a nice small wooden house. There was no electricity supply, they used kerosene lamps. They heated their house with Russian stove, they also cooked food in it. They had no water supply, and brought water (by the way, very tasty water) from the well in the court yard. There were some furniture pieces inside (certainly), but we used to sleep on the floor. The town was very small; grandfather's shop was situated in its center, near the market building. We used to help him to bring bread from the bakery to the shop.

The house was surrounded by a small garden, full of old apple-trees. They produced poor crops. My grandparents had neither cattle nor domestic animals.

They had no assistants about the house. But in grandfather's bakery, someone helped him for sure: otherwise he would have not managed.

My grandmother and grandfather were religious people. Grandfather wore kippah, grandmother bound her head by a kerchief, but she did not wear a wig. They always celebrated Sabbath and all holidays. They ate only kosher food. They visited synagogue, but I can't say with certainty how often. I guess not every day: their life was hard, it was necessary to work all day long.

I remember nothing about political views of my grandfather, but I know for sure that he was not a member of any political party. He was interested only in his work: he worked hard and loved to work hard.

He was not an educated person. I guess that he had finished two classes of cheder, not more.

And it goes without saying that my grandmother and grandfather never thought about going somewhere for vacation.

I can say nothing neither about their relations with neighbors, nor about their brothers and sisters.