

Mina Smolianskaya's Father Nuhim Smolianskiy And His Acquaintances



My father Nuhim Smolianskiy (right on the front) visiting his acquaintances in Petersburg in 1915.

My father Nuhim Smolianskiy was born in Pliskovo in 1880s. My grandmother Hana told me that he studied at cheder and read a lot. He borrowed books from melamed, as my grandmother didn't have money to buy books. My father wanted to become a lawyer. There were very few educated people at that time. My mother, for example, had no education. My father came from a very poor family that couldn't afford to pay for his studies even though he was eager to study. Besides, he was a Jew and there was admission restriction of 5% for Jews willing to enter higher educational institutions. This 5% were boys from rich families. My father was advised to be baptized if he wanted to study, but he refused. He had to give up his dreams and became an apprentice of a carpenter. He became professional and earned good money. My mother told me that my father liked to dress up like a town man after work. He wore suits and vests, white shirts and a hat. He was a handsome tall man with fair hair and gray eyes. My father was raised religious.

My mother told me how she met my father. Her sister Tzypa had married a baker from Pliskovo and moved to live with him in the village of Pliskovo. Her husband's last name was Bluvshstein. My grandmother Hana and her children lived near Tzypa's husband's bakery and so my mother met her future husband at the bakery. My mother was so eager to leave her brother's family that she accepted my father's proposal without any further considerations. They got married in 1912. They had a Jewish wedding in Pliskovo. My mother moved to her husband's small house near the house of my grandmother.

There were 6 children in our family. The older sister Rulia was born in a year after my parents got married - in 1913. I was born in 1914. My Jewish name is Mindl. My sister Surah was born in 1915.

Surah was an invalid. When she was a baby my mother dropped her and my sister injured her leg. Her parents only noticed that there was something wrong with her leg when she began to walk, but there was no opportunity to get her proper treatment in the village and she remained lame. My sister Donia was born in 1916. Then, in 1917 my parents had a son Joseph. The youngest Fania was born in 1918. Soon after Fania was born our father fell ill with typhoid and died in 1918. Fania was 3 months old when he died. I remember when my father was dying my mother was standing beside his bed crying "Nuhim, why are you leaving me with six children? What am I going to do with the children? I wish I were in your shoes. What am I going to do with six children?" My father's mother Hana, a very smart and considerate woman, was standing there, too. She was also a widow and raised her children all by herself. She was telling my mother that she had to think about the children, but my mother kept crying and screaming.