

Wedding Photo Of Sonya Goldberg



This is a wedding photo of my maternal grandparents, Sonya and Isay Goldberg. The photo was taken in Nerchinsk in the 1890s.

Grandmother Sonya was brought from Poland to Nerchinsk so that she could be married off to Isay Goldberg, my grandfather. There was a lack of brides in Siberia and they were ordered from other locations, like furniture, through matchmakers and acquaintances.

Sonya was only sixteen then and she missed Poland and her family a lot, but later her father Barukh moved from Poland to Nerchinsk to join his daughter when she was already married. Sonya was a housewife all her life, and she brought up six kids: five girls, Sonya, Rakhil, Shifra, Liya and

Debora, and one boy, Yakov.

The family was well to do. Isay Goldberg and his four brothers, Abram, Pinkhas, David and Levi, owned a manufactured goods shop with stationery, food stuffs, and household goods, and traded both whole sale and retail. I remember one occasion my mother told me about.

A shop-assistant started to wrap a piece of material around himself and at the moment grandfather Isay came in, and of course that shop-assistant was fired right then.

Each of the Goldberg brothers had their own house and servants. My grandfather used to hire a coachman, a cook and a housemaid, and he had some horses and a cow.

Grandfather Isay died of throat cancer before the Revolution, in 1910. He liked boiling water all his life and got sick. They treated him in Moscow, implanted a tube in his throat, but that kind of life couldn't last long.

The children of Sonya and Isay Goldberg were brought up to love nature and literature. Grandmother Sonya used to read a lot. I don't remember which books exactly. I know only that they had a big library at home. The children inherited her love of books.

All their kids finished good schools as qualified teachers. Yakov, Shifra and Debora were taught to play piano. Grandfather Isay, who played violin, and his daughter Shifra performed duets and managed even very complicated compositions.

The children were taught music, but none of them ever mastered a foreign language. The Goldberg children used to gather on winter nights and play games, make music, cook pelmeni [Russian national dish with meat and flour] in big company. That was a lot of fun! The family didn't follow religious rules strictly.

They attended the prayer house on holidays and would certainly celebrate Jewish holidays at home - Rosh Hashanah, Purim, Pesach. Everyone in the house spoke Russian except for Grandmother Shosya.