

Sonya Goldberg With Her Family



This is my maternal grandmother, Sonya Goldberg, with her father Barukh Vingelnikov and daughters Liya, Malka, Debora and Shifra. The photo was taken in Nerchinsk in 1913.

My maternal great-granddad, Barukh Vingelnikov, became a widower early and married again. I know little about his first wife, but his second wife, whose name I don't know either, was a difficult

and selfish woman and mother used to purse her lips when talking about her.

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.

My grandparents' children 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.