

Malka Deribizova With Neighbours



These are the Goldberg brothers' children with neighbors outside David Goldberg's house in Nerchinsk. My mother Malka is 17 here, she is second from the left.

Liya, mother's sister, is standing on the right. In the back row in a black dress you can see Grandma Shosya Godberg, the mother of the Goldberg brothers. I don't know the others. They must be neighbors and friends, probably with servants. The photo was taken in 1922.

My grandparents' family was well to do. My grandfather 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.

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.

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.

Everyone in Nerchinsk used the big library owned by a well-known Siberian businessman and gold-trader, Butin. Balls were organized in the public house built by Butin. [Editor's note: public houses in pre-revolutionary Russia accommodated a library, a lecture/theater hall, a Sunday school, a buffet and a book store.

The Bolsheviks made a good use of public houses to promote their revolutionary propaganda and organize mass meetings. After the Revolution of 1917 public houses were substituted by educational clubs and houses of culture].

My grandparents and their children didn't experience any anti-Semitism. Even a priest from the local Orthodox Church visited Isay's house. Mama told me that they, the children, felt their 'peculiarity' only in religion lessons at school: they were released from such classes.