

Rachel Gitelis' Mother Hana Gitelis



My mother Hana Gitelis on her birthday. The photo was taken in the town of Ladyzhin in the 1920s. My mother was born in 1888. She was the youngest in the family and helped her mother around the house. She received a religious education at home: A melamed taught her to read and to pray in Hebrew. When my father came to work in Ladyzhin in 1908, he rented a room at the inn. He fell

in love with my mother and she liked him, too. Five years later they got married. I never knew why it took so long and never asked them why. I have a copy of their marriage certificate issued by a local rabbi in 1913. I don't know any details about their wedding, but I guess they must have had a traditional Jewish wedding. After their wedding they lived in a house, which was specifically built for them, next to my grandmother's inn. There were three rooms in this house. The furniture wasn't very rich. We had two kitchens, the winter kitchen inside the house and the summer kitchen outdoors. We had no servants, but a shabesgoy [non-Jew] came once a week on Sabbath to do whatever work we weren't allowed to do. We had neither electricity nor running water, nobody in Ladyzhin did. We had a stove in the house and a kind of toilet in the yard. It was a small house, and there wasn't enough space for all of us, so my parents began to build a bigger house. They didn't complete the construction though because we had to move to Odessa. They opened a food store in one of the rooms of the house - it simply had a number of shelves and a counter. They sold honey, butter, herring, and so on, which were purchased from the surrounding villages by a young man whose nickname was 'Burl, the pug-nosed'. It was a pure family business without any employees. Our store was popular and always full of customers, Jewish and non-Jewish. My parents were honest and decent people and always treated their customers in fair and just manner.