

Bella Kisselgof 's Maternal Great Grandmother Bruha Dreitser



This photo of Bruha Dreitser, my maternal great-grandmother was taken in Dnepropetrovsk in 1904. My great-grandmother Bruha Dreitser was born in Novo-Vitebsk in the 1850s. She was the youngest daughter in a very poor family. From childhood she had to work hard. She was so eager to study. My grandmother told me that when her older brothers were doing their homework - they studied at cheder - she was always fussing around them trying to understand what they were

talking about or reading. She learned her ABCs and some mathematics in this way. My grandmother recalled that after Bruha finished with her house chores she took a book in Yiddish or Hebrew to read. It was the best pastime for her. Her daughters had a teacher at home and their mother helped them to do their homework. She was known in the town as an intelligent and wise woman. People often asked her advice. She knew everything - why a fruit tree gave no fruit, or how to cure a sick child, and how to get more milk from a cow. People often tried to give her some money for her advice but she never accepted any. If they gave her a present she accepted it, but always gave something in return. According to the Jewish traditions a woman couldn't be an arbitrator, but people elected my great grandmother as a member of the town arbitrary court several times. She was loved and respected. My grandmother told me that when my great grandmother Bruha died in 1921 the whole population of the town came to her funeral, and they said that life would be more difficult without Bruha.