

Bella Kisselgof 's Mother Sofia Rivkina's Family



A photo of the Rivkin family taken in Dnepropetrovsk in 1910. Bottom row, from left to right: (seated) my grandmother's sister Luba holding her child; my mother's brother Grisha (Gersh); my maternal grandmother Riva Rivkina (maiden name - Dreitser); and my mother, Sofia Rivkina. Top row, from left to right: Luba's husband; Luba, my grandmother's sister; and my mother's older brother who died from a concussion after a fall when he was 13. There was no school in the town so all his daughters got a religious education at home. They all studied at a Russian grammar school in Ekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk). They lived in the hostel of that grammar school. The girls were good students. They were exempted from attending Christian classes. Senior school children had dressmaking classes and my grandmother Riva had good dressmaking skills. Later she made clothes for the whole family. In the 1920s the young men in the Rivkin family got bored with the dullness of life in their small Jewish town. Before the late 1920s they had all moved to Gorlovka, the miners' town, in Donbass. By that time Luba and my mother were both married in Novo-Vitebsk. They had no wedding parties. The young people of that time rejected Jewish traditions to begin a new life. Civil marriages were popular at that time, and weddings were considered a bourgeois vestige. My grandparents were very unhappy that their daughter rejected the Jewish traditions but they had to accept it and they got along well with their sons-in-law. All the girls married. I don't remember their husbands' names, unfortunately. Haislova married a teacher. They had three children. She died after the war, in the 1960s. Another sister of my grandmother and her husband left for America. I don't know her name and we have no further information about them. Luba's husband was a timber dealer. They had two sons. I know that Luba survived the war, but I remember no details about her life. I don't remember much about Sonia either. She was married to a doctor. Her husband perished on the front during WWI. Sonia then married a second time and that is all I know about her. My grandmother was a wonderful cook. She managed to keep the family well fed and dressed for a relatively small amount of money. She made our clothes from the same fabric but of different design. There is a family photo where all the clothes that appear were

made by my grandmother.