

Rachil Meitina With Her Family



This is a photograph of our family and relatives. We were visiting Ruvim and Esphir Okunev, my grandmother's sister and her husband, in Vitebsk. The photo was taken in spring 1924. First row from left to right: Sophia Levitan, my cousin; my second cousin and my future husband Isaac Verkhvski - he is five years old here; I six years old and my sister Vera Meitina. Second row, from left to right: my husband's mother, my mother's cousin Sophia Verkhovskaya; Roman Okunev, the head of the Okunev family; my husband's grandmother Esfir Okuneva and my mother Fania Meitina, nee Kazarnovskaya. Third row: my husband's aunt Anna Okuneva; my father Alexandr Meitin; my husband's aunt Sophia Meitina and my cousin Alexandr Levitan. My mother's parents lived in the village of Kazarnovichi near Vitebsk. My mother was born there in 1883. Later her family moved to Vitebsk where they lived on Smolenskaya Street in the center of town. I know very little about my maternal grandfather. He died before I was born. I think he died during World War I. They told me he was very greedy. He literally starved to death on bags of food stocks. His name was Morduch Kazarnovski. He was born in Kazarnovichi, but I don't know the dates of his birth or death. My maternal grandmother's name was Feiga Rokha Kazarnovskaya. I was named after her. She died shortly before I was born. It probably happened in 1917. She was also born in Kazarnovichi. I believe she was born in the late 1850s. My grandmother had a younger sister, Esfir. She married Ruvim Okunev, a Jewish man. She died shortly before World War II. They had four daughters. Her older daughter Sophia was my husband's mother. She was born in 1891 and died in 1968. The second daughter's name was Mary, born in 1892. The third daughter was Anna, born in 1894. And there was another Sophia. Probably, one of the girl's name was Seina in Yiddish, but

when they changed their names to Russian ones [see common name] they both happened to have the name of Sophia. She was born at the beginning of the 20th century and died in 2001. My mother and father spent their vacation with the children at the dacha [cottage]. When we lived in Petrograd we rented a dacha on the bank of a lake somewhere in the suburb of Petrograd. We had a boat and went rowing on the lake. We often went to visit our parents' relatives in Vitebsk. In summer 1934 we stayed in Shpili near Vitebsk. I think now it's a suburb of Vitebsk. There were many apple orchards there. It was a lovely spot. I remember the sound of apples hitting the terrace of the house where we lived: sweet small Belarus apples. That summer the family of my future husband Isaac Verkhoski lived there, too. He is my second cousin. His mother Sophia Verkhovskaya and grandmother Esfir Okuneva were there, too. That was when I met him and we made friends, but many years passed before we got married. There are no relatives of ours left in Vitebsk.