

Rozalia Ledskaya



This is my mother Rozalia Ledskaya before getting married. Mother gave this picture to father before he left for compulsory service in the Tsarist army.

The picture was kept in our family album after parents got married. When father left my mother, she kept that picture. The picture was made in Lithuania in 1912.

My mother's family lived in a small town of Girtakol in Lithuanian province. I tried to find that town on the map, but failed.

During my trips to Lithuania nobody could tell me anything about that town. I think it was a Jewish town. It must have been exterminated during WW2.

Anyway it currently does not exist. I have never seen my maternal grandparents. I only know about them from my mother's tales.

Grandfather Moses Ledskiy was a teacher in the Jewish elementary school. Grandmother was a housewife. There were five children in the family.

My mother Rozalia (Jewish name Reizl) was the third child in the family. She was born in 1895. Mother and her siblings went to lyceum. All of them finished a full course.

In 1912 my father was engaged to my mother. They must have been acquainted by matchmakers, because mother's family lived very far from Smolensk. She lived in Lithuania.

That year father was drafted for the compulsory military service in the Tsarist army. Soon World War I was unleashed. Father was not very lucky he was captured by the enemy and sent to the camp for the captives located not far Wroclaw, Lower Silesia.

Father was released from the camp in 1918. When the war was over, father came back to Smolensk.

When World War I began and Germans put foot at Lithuanian territory, mother and her younger sister Ida fled to Ukraine to Kherson suburbs [470 km to the South from Kiev], where her distant relatives lived. The town they lived in was called Oleshki, then it was renamed Tsyurupinsk.

When father was released from camp, he came to Oleshki to see my mother. They left Oleshki and went to mother's parents in Lithuania. They got married there. I think they had a traditional Jewish wedding.

Mother said that father was feeble and exhausted after captivity. He was fed well in Lithuania. He was given a lot of milk to drink. They lived with mother's parents for a while and then father took mother to Smolensk.

They lived in the house of father's parents. For some reason father's relatives did not like and did not accept my mother. Mother said that the only person who treated her well was father's elder brother Isaac.

Others were constantly giving her the cold shoulder. Mother loved father very much and did her best for his relatives to get to like her. She did not want to be the bone of contention.

Unfortunately, all her efforts to get along with father's family were futile. Father went to work as a land surveyor. Mother was a housewife. She took hard continual disdain and humiliation towards her. Finally, parents decided to move to Moscow. In 1922 they left Smolensk.

Mother never got married again after she divorced father. She lived only for me. I was the essence of her life. Mother did her best to bring me up. She tried to teach me how to read and write in Yiddish. But I was not good at it.

Either I was a poor student or my mother was a poor teacher. Mother did not tell me about Jewish history and religion. She did not observe Jewish traditions and did not mark holidays. Maybe it was caused by the struggle of the Soviet regime against religion.

Mother understood that I would be raised an atheist at school and she did not want to make my life more difficult. During the weekend my mother and I used to ski during winter and in summer time we took long strolls and went to the forest to gather berries and mushrooms.