

The Family Of Dobrina Rivkind's Mother, Pesya Rivkind



This picture was taken in Vitebsk in 1924. This is the Khodek family. The sitting woman is my grandmother Tsylya. Second person to the right (also sitting) is my grandfather Vulf. And their four children: son Lev (he is about 20 years old) and daughters (from left to right): Khana, Pesya and Liya.

All of my mother's relatives come from shtettles not far from the town of Vitebsk - a rather large city in Belarus. My mother's family was very poor. Grandfather Vulf Khodek worked for a container seller. His obligation was to mend the sacks and fix other containers. He earned about three rubles per month, which was very little. I do not remember my maternal grandfather well, he died in 1939, when I was six. He was a very kind man and loved me and my sister, his granddaughters, very much. I remember him and grandmother together: she was short and he was tall and bald. Grandmother's name was Tsylya Khodek, nee Rukhman. She was not tall, with gray, beautifully set hair. She did not work as many women did in those days, and took care of the family. Tsylya had a small store downstairs in the same house where they lived, which worked around the clock. It was not a store in today's meaning; it was really a very small shop. It was possible to buy bagels and cakes there and various other small things. People could knock on the door at any time and ask for her. She would open up and give them what they asked for. However, the profit was small. Grandmother devoted the largest part of her life to the family, children and household, and the shop was simply an extra earning. There were four children in the family: three girls and one boy. All four were born in Vitebsk. Mother was the eldest, her name was Pesya, she was born in 1899 and died at the age of 95 in 1994. Her sisters' names were Khana (1907 - 1993), Lilya (1908 - 1954), and brother's name was Lev (1904 - 1942). There were also other children in the family but they died at a very young age.

Later, about 1897, they moved to Vitebsk. They lived near Vitebsk before in Smolyany shtetl. According to the family, they had a small house there, with a small garden full of flowers, because they had three daughters, who loved flowers very much. After the Revolution in 1917 [They did not participate in the Revolution, it did not even affect them] they sold the small house where they lived, left Vitebsk and found themselves in Petrograd [today St.Petersburg]. Lilya married a

military, a career officer and followed him everywhere in his trips. They had two children: daughter Nelya and son Boris. Lilya did not work anywhere. Her husband perished at the frontline at the very beginning of the war. She also died at an early age of a severe neurological disease (she was a little more than 40 years old). Khana finished a musical school and worked as a teacher of chorus singing in various musical schools. She lived in Leningrad for a long time and died here. She had no family of her own. Lev became an accountant and worked according to his profession in "Lenodezhda", an important combine in those days. He perished during the war at the frontline near Leningrad.