Nina Gertzevna With Her Grandfather Abram Kulakovsky

This photo of my sister Nina Gerttevna (nee Shulyakovskaya) and our grandfather Abram Kulakovsky was taken some time in the late 1920s.

My maternal grandfather lived in Baslovitsy, a Russian village in Slutsk district. He was a peasant. He had a little house with small windows, earthen floor and a straw roof. He had seven daughters and a son. I can't tell you anything about them. The eldest daughter was my Mom. Grandpa lived in the village and not far from him lived the landowner, Volzhinsky. The landowner noticed that Grandpa managed to achieve proper crop rotation on a small plot of land and was able to feed his family. So he recommended him to another important landowner for the position of manager.

Later Grandfather Kulakovsky owned two houses: the old small one and a new nice big one. When Grandpa lived in Slutsk he sometimes took us to the village to show us the small house where they'd lived before, and we also saw his new house with a wooden floor, good roof and big windows. It was before the Revolution. There was neither electricity nor a water supply system in the village. They kept a cow. Grandpa Kulakovsky didn't wear a big beard, all in all, he could be called a secular man. Certainly he observed the traditions, but not to the extent my other grandfather did; he just celebrated the holidays.

My elder sister Nina was born in 1910. She was a candidate of medical sciences, taught pathological anatomy first at the Minsk Institute, later in evacuation in Sverdlovsk. In 1943 she wrote to Moscow, her professor invited her there, thus since 1943 she was in Moscow. They had a four-year study period at the Medical Institute at that time. She entered it even a little bit earlier than it was allowed, because there were no passports. She defended her thesis in Moscow already at the age of 24 and studied for three years at the post-graduate department. Her family didn't observe Jewish traditions.