

Rimma Leibert's Grandmother Riva Blumenzweig, Mother Rosa Leibert



This is my maternal grandmother Riva Blumenzweig sitting, my mother's older brother Boris Blumenzweig is standing, my mother Rosa is on the right, and on the left is her younger sister Tsyliya. My grandmother is wearing a traditional Jewish outfit for women, wrapped in a shawl, and has her head covered. This photo was taken in Kerch in 1917. My grandfather Abram, born in 1880, went to study vocation after finishing cheder. He became an apprentice of a blacksmith. Grandfather Abram was also a big strong man and did well in his vocation. Abram married Riva, a Jewish girl, and this is all I know about my grandmother. After the wedding the newly weds moved to Kerch town in the Crimea, in the east of the Crimean peninsula, where my grandmother's distant relatives lived. My grandfather Abram went to the synagogue on Friday, Saturday and Jewish holidays. On weekdays he prayed at home with his tallit and tefillin on starting his days with a prayer. Grandmother Riva was also very religious. She was a housewife, as Jewish traditions required. According to what my mother and older sister told me, my grandfather lived in a small house whitewashed from the outside in the suburb of the town near the seashore. In the evenings my grandfather went fishing to provide additional food for the family. My grandparents kept chickens and even a cow at one time. My grandparents were poor and my grandfather could earn as much as was necessary to survive. My grandmother Riva was a kind woman. My mother's early childhood was fair and happy. My mother told me she liked helping her father in the forge. On Friday my grandmother cleaned the house for Sabbath and cooked dinner leaving it in the stove till Saturday. In 1920, during the Civil War, the time of devastation and epidemics, my grandmother Riva contracted cholera from her neighbors, whom she was trying to help, and died within few days

leaving five children behind. Grandfather Abram remarried, but his second wife, whose name I don't remember since my mother didn't even want a mention of her, happened to be a poor replacement of the mother of the children. My mother's older sister Lusya, born in 1903, got married and moved to live with her husband. Her husband Yefim Tsyrulnik, a Jew, worked at the mill. My mother's brother Boris, born in 1905, finished a rabfak and entered Odessa Polytechnic College. He became an engineer. He lived in Odessa with his wife Polia, a Jew, and their daughter Bella. My mother's sister Ola (Jewish Golda), born in 1910, my mother Reizl, born in 1912, and the youngest Tsylia, born in 1915, had the hardest life with their stepmother. Actually, I don't know what was so bad about this woman. Perhaps, she just failed to win the girls' love. My mother didn't like her whatsoever. My grandfather's brother Haim came to Kerch to take my mother to Odessa, when she was 14. This happened before she finished the 7th form at school. Ola stayed in Kerch. In the late 1920s she married Adolph Vakerman, a Jewish man from Odessa, and moved to Odessa. In the late 1930s Ola's daughter Galina was born. Tsylia never got married and lived with Ola's family.