

Solomon Manevich's Mother Rachil Manevich And Uncle Nohim Katz



This is my mother Rachil Manevich and her brother Nohim Katz. The photo was taken in Tomsk in 1907.

I know little about my mother's family. My mother and her siblings were born in a small town of Chaussy in Belarus in the 1850s. My mother told me that Chaussy where she was born was a small town with numerous Jewish population. Jews lived in small houses in central parts of the town. My mother's family belonged to middle class. They lived in strict accordance with halakhah, followed the kashrut and celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays. My mother didn't tell me any details since she and her sisters and brothers found their father's requirement to strictly observe Jewish religious traditions a burden. It wasn't a burden only for Nohim, one of my mother's brothers. The family was very poor.

My mother Rachil was born in 1886. At birth she was given the Jewish name of Rokhlia-Genia. My mother didn't like talking about her childhood and so I know only fragments of her life. After finishing the Jewish school she spent few years at home helping her mother around the house. My mother read a lot. She was fond of Russian classics and liked Pushkin, Tolstoy and Turgenev. She was bored with living in a small town with its old traditions and customs, she was attracted by new progressive ideas. Besides, my mother was eager to get a good education and become a teacher or a doctor. She left home at the age of 16. Looking for a job she visited few towns in Belarus. Somehow she happened to come to Tomsk, a big town in Siberia, in 1907. She found a job and was an attendant at the pharmacy in the town hospital, then assistant pharmacist and later she became a pharmacist. She didn't attend any school, but she was smart and the doctor she worked for sympathized with her and trained her after work. Her brother Nohim came to visit her there. My

mother lived in Tomsk until 1910 and then she began to travel in Russia.

I knew well my mother's brother Nohim Berko Katz, born in 1878. Nohim received traditional Jewish education: he studied at cheder and later had classes with a melamed who taught him at home. Grandfather Leizer also taught Nohim hoping that in due time he would become a rabbi. My mother's brother became a similarly well-educated man reading the Talmud and Torah like his father, but he was not adjusted to everyday life whatsoever. After the revolution of 1917 Nohim tried to do different things starting one business or another, but it didn't work. He was an apprentice of a shoemaker, but that was no success either. His brothers helped him sending him money or clothes. Once they even sent him some Indian rubber and Nohim started shoemaking business that fell apart like all his previous efforts. His wife Riva and their children Sarra, born in 1924 and named after our grandmother and Yan, born in 1926 and named after our grandfather, lived on what they received from America and when their connection with abroad came to an end my mother was helping them. We lived together before the Great Patriotic War. Riva died of cancer in the mid of the 1930s.