

Rachel Gitelis' Father Mordko Gitelis



My father Mordko Gitelis. The photo was taken in the town of Ladyzhin in the 1920s. My father was born in Olgopol in 1888. He could speak Yiddish, Russian and Ukrainian. He finished cheder. He was gifted, but couldn't continue his education. He was the oldest child in the family and had to help his father at work to provide for the family. After finishing cheder he became an apprentice in sorting out eggs. There was no work for him in Olgopol, so he moved to Ladyzhin in 1908. When my father came to work in Ladyzhin in 1908, he rented a room at my grandmother's inn. He fell in love with my mother and she liked him, too. Five years later they got married. I never knew why it took so long and never asked them why. I have a copy of their marriage certificate issued by a local rabbi

in 1913. I don't know any details about their wedding, but I guess they must have had a traditional Jewish wedding. They opened a food store in one of the rooms of the house - it simply had a number of shelves and a counter. They sold honey, butter, herring, and so on, which were purchased from the surrounding villages by a young man whose nickname was 'Burl, the pug-nosed'. It was a pure family business without any employees. Our store was popular and always full of customers, Jewish and non-Jewish. My parents were honest and decent people and always treated their customers in fair and just manner. We moved to Odessa in 1928. My father worked as nickel plater and my mother was a housewife.