

Rakhil Khotianova With Her Relatives



My mother, Rakhil Mendelevna Khotianova (nee Kurnova), is utmost to the right; Mother's elder brother David is in the center; our distant relative on my mother's side is utmost to the left, I don't know her name or anything about her fate, I didn't have time to ask my mother.

Mother had this picture taken in 1920 in Vitebsk after she lost her two children, the three-year-old son Daniil and the three-month-old daughter Ida. Those were very hard years.

Mother lived with her parents, the Kurnovs, when my father returned from the front in 1916 and started to work with them. Grandfather Mendel hired him to work as an assistant.

Mendel taught him the tailor's craft, though Father already had considerable experience.

When Mother and Father fell in love with each other, there was no match-making. My father was completely alone by that time. His father, my grandfather Boris, had disappeared from Vitebsk long ago. They had a splendid wedding, with a lot of guests and presents. They were a very nice couple.

Mother had two children before I was born. Daniil was born in 1917. He was a very handsome child. When he died, Mother kept his lock. Everybody said that he had been very handsome. He had very big eyes.

Once, a woman approached him in the street. She picked him up from the ground and said, 'How handsome you are.' He fell ill and died. It happened in 1920.

Mother believed that he fell ill because an evil spell was cast on him. However, there was another reason. Nina, mother's sister, was rinsing the washing on the bank of the river.

She took Daniil with her. She took off his shoes and put his feet into the ice-cold water. The child caught a cold and fell ill with meningitis. Meningitis was a fatal illness in those years.

Mother gave birth to a daughter, Ida, in 1919. She starved to death when Mother was sick with typhoid in Vitebsk. Father was in the army at that time. I don't know anything else, since I wasn't born yet.

David, mother's younger brother, was also a tailor, his father Mendel taught him. Mendel handed down his art to his sons.

David lived in Minsk, he married a Jewess and left for Minsk, his wife's motherland, for good. David and his wife had three children: a boy and two girls, I don't remember their names.

Two of them died recently, only one daughter is alive, she lived in Archangelsk.