

Isaac Rotman's Mother Sara Tush And Her Family



This photograph was taken in 1903 in one of the St. Petersburg photo studios. My mother married my father only 5 years later, but I'd like to tell you about them right here.

My father's name was David-Leyb Abramovich. You see that he had 2 names, therefore his children had different patronymics: Davidovich and Leybovich. They chose patronymic they liked more. He was born in 1880 in the Novgorod region. He was a very serious person, always very strict with his family members. He was a man of indisputable authority. He liked to talk with his friends: they came to us and held endless conversations about politics, trade, about everything. They seldom joked, spoke seriously and in details.

My father used to press his children (especially boys) very close. If only a girl complained of something trifling (for example, one of us had pulled her hair), we could not avoid punishment. Sometimes (and it often happened) he whipped us.

He finished only an elementary school. I think that his mother tongue was Yiddish, but his Russian was very perfect.

My father was an antiquarian. He mastered that profession himself and was an owner of an antique shop. Soon after the Revolution my father was arrested. Mum showed herself as a real hero: she visited some important persons, among them was Gorky. She also went to some ambassadors, who were father's customers. Authorities liberated father after a year, but his shop had been already confiscated. He became an appraiser of antiques, but nobody was sorry for it, because it was clear that the point was to save his life. Father still had reputation of a high class expert, therefore he was invited to work as a member of the state commission for appraising residuary things after liquidation of palaces. It was he who made a decision: to put a thing up for sale or to keep it in a state museum. Father worked as an expert-appraiser all his life long.

Mum was born in 1891 in Staraya Russa. Her name was Sara Moskevna (after the Revolution Moisseevna). My Mum was all kindness. She used to shout to father 'Do not touch him; at least do not hit him on his head.' She was uneducated: to my mind she spent only several years at school. Her mother tongue was Russian, but she knew Yiddish well.

At first she was a housewife, and later started assisting father in his shop. After we forfeited our property she became a seller of outer clothing. Later she worked at a jeweller's.

Mum was the second wife of my father. First he was married to Ghevsha Kukoy. This is all I know about her. She died, and our family members never spoke about it. Somehow I got to know that she jumped out of the window after she had given birth to her son. And my mother lost her parents when she was very young, she met my father in Petersburg, married him and took care of his 3 children. They married in 1908 in Petersburg. Wedding ceremony was arranged in the synagogue (chuppah etc. according to tradition). Father was 10 years older than Mum. In contrast to my father who died at the age of 54, Mum lived a long life. She died in 1978 at the age of 86. In her declining years Mum walked using a walking-stick. One day she got her walking-stick caught in something, fell down and fractured her thigh. She was placed into a hospital, where she died from pneumonia.

My parents never dressed traditionally. They wore ordinary clothes (according to time). Daddy wore dark suits, and Mum preferred light ones: she was very cheerful and liked light in color.