

Yakov Goldberg



This is my mother's brother Yakov Goldberg with his horse in the yard of their house. The photo was taken in Nerchinsk in the 1910s.

Yakov was born in 1892, grew up, and left for St Petersburg before the Revolution to study some craft. He didn't know exactly what particular craft he would choose.

He planned to make up his mind depending on what was available in St Petersburg, but his parents didn't think he would learn anything but horse riding, such a whimsical person he was.

He had to grease the local policeman's palm every week so that he would pretend not to notice a Jew violating 'residential qualification.' [Jews were not allowed to settle in capitals - only in the Pale of Settlement.

Yakov would bring a 15 kopeck coin, and the policeman would click (smiling cunningly) that coin before his very eyes. Uncle was a hot-tempered and rather independent man to bear such a humiliation, and he went back to Nerchinsk before the Revolution, and he didn't do any work there. His parents were rich enough to help and support their children.

After the Revolution of 1917, Yakov returned to St Petersburg, completed book-keeping courses, worked as a book-keeper and stayed here for good.

He had no children, although he was married twice. I met both of his wives, the first was Russian, they scolded and brushed each other down all their lives, and finally she died.

They lived together for 30 years in St Petersburg. He had another wife when he was a very old man, I don't remember her name.

They also lived miserably, had rows, and when they decided to get married in 1960, her granddaughter from her first marriage came to school and said that her grandmother was getting married, and the whole class rushed outside to look at such an old bride.

She was Russian, as was his first wife. She died later, after Yakov's death in 1965.