

Yevsey Kotkov's Grandmother Toba-Bluma



This is a picture of my grandmother Toba - Bluma, my mother's mother. The photo taken in Rafalovka, Lutsk province, in 1912. My mother's parents' grandfather Joseph and grandmother Bluma had a big house in Rafalovka. It had five rooms and a kitchen with a stove in it. All [toilets] were outside, of course. There was an orchard around the house and there was also a vegetable garden where my grandmother grew all kinds of things. They had a cow, and there was a cowshed next to the house, which was also used as a storage room. My grandparents spoke Yiddish at home. My grandfather was a plumpish man with a beard, but my grandmother was very thin. She was called Liebe and my grandfather was called Iosia. They worked non-stop - it was their way of life. Their biggest happiness in the world was when their grandchildren visited them. My grandmother loved us children. She used to make a strudel with apples and nuts when we came, and also kihlah (ground matzo with raisins, nuts and poppy seeds formed into small balls and fried). My grandmother made butter and sour cream. Her day started at three in the morning. She had to milk the cow and cook, prepare 'tsyber' (which was the Yiddish term for fodder for the cow), etc. Each Monday she baked bread for the following week. My grandmother was religious and didn't do any work on Friday evening and Saturday - she didn't even strike a match. On Saturday a

Ukrainian girl, Pruska, used to come to check whether there was [enough] fresh water. My grandmother used to bake a special roll for Pruska. When the Imperialistic war [World War I] began in 1914, the front got closer every day to Rovno, where I lived with my parents and siblings, and Rafalovka, and we had to flee. My father and mother, five children and my mother's mother all moved to Kiev. My grandfather joined us later, and once again began to sew and repair footwear for everyone. But my grandparents didn't live long in Kiev. My grandmother died in 1916, and my grandfather followed her in 1920.