

Fira Shwartz's Family



From left to right, sitting in the 1st row are: my maternal uncle Yankel Borodianskiy's children Naum and Beba Borodianskiy; my other maternal uncle Samuel's daughter Bella Borodianskaya and his wife Rosa. In the 2nd row are: my mother Rosa Shwartz and my uncle Yankel. Standing are my father Israel Shwartz, Uncle Samuel's son Semyon Borodianskiy and Uncle Samuel. The photo was taken in Kiev in 1934 when Yankel and his family were visiting their relatives. My maternal grandparents' children left the house when they grew up. Samuel became a tailor in Gornostaypol and moved to Kiev when he was 17. He got a job at a military tailor's shop where they made uniforms for soldiers and officers. He was an apprentice there at first, but he was very good at sewing and soon became one of the best tailors of the shop. He married a Jewish girl called Rosa. She came from Kiev. They had two children: a son called Semyon, born in 1922 and a daughter, Bella, born in 1928. Yankel moved to Baku, Azerbaijan [2,000 km from Gornostaypol]. He went with his former classmate whose brother had moved to Baku two years before. I know very little about Yankel's life in Baku. He worked at a plant. He married a Jewish girl from Baku named Diphia, and they had two children: a daughter called Beba and a son called Naum. After finishing school in the 1920s my mother moved to Kiev. Uncle Samuel convinced her that there were more opportunities in a big town. I know very little about my mother's life before I was born. She told me that she worked as a nurse in a kindergarten. I don't know how she met my father. He was a forwarding agent at the railway post office. My parents got married soon after they met. My mother was 24; my father was four years older. They had a civil ceremony at the registry office. Weddings were considered to be a bourgeois vestige, so they had no wedding party. My father lived in a communal apartment. There were two other families living in this apartment. My father's room was small and dark. Its only window faced an entry corridor of the building. There was a wardrobe, my parent's bed, my bed, a table and a few chairs in the room. There was a big common kitchen where each family had its own Primus stove. There was a strong smell of kerosene in the kitchen due to kerosene containers that were kept there. My mother worked for some time after she got married,

but she quit her job before I was born and stayed at home afterwards.