

Moisey Muchnik, With His Brothers Folyk And Motl



On the left is my father Moisey Muchnik, with him are his brothers Motl and Folyk Muchnik. This photo was taken in Bershada in a photo shop before WWI, in 1916; the brothers are wearing papaha overcoats made by my father.

My father's parents had four children: three sons and a daughter. My father was two-three years younger than his brothers: Motl, the oldest, was born in 1882, and Folyk - in 1884. I don't know

what they did for a living. I know, though, that they were married and had children. When WWI began, they crossed the border to Romania to avoid service in the army. They reached Romania successfully. Few months later my father received a letter from them that was sent from Canada. We terminated correspondence with them in the middle 1930s, when it was not recommended or even dangerous to have relatives abroad, so this is all information I have about them.

My father Moisey Muchnik was born in Bershada in 1886. He took after his father: he was quiet, gentle and kind. Though my grandfather could well afford to pay for his education, my father finished cheder and decided that he had to go to work to support his aging parents. He became a craftsman making fur jackets and embroidering them, this was a popular craft in Bershada. He must have had an artistic talent since he was doing quite well. His jackets embroidered with red yarn were in great demand with Ukrainian farmers from nearby villages. When WWI began and his brothers decided to escape abroad my father didn't dare to take up this risky venture due to his gentle character, probably. He didn't want to go to serve in the czarist army either. Besides, religious orthodox Jews - and grandfather Yankel and his family belonged to them, could not kill people, even for the sake of their motherland. Some Jews turned to mutilation to avoid service in the czarist army. There were even such individuals, probably, the ones having primary medical education, who did such injuries that did not threaten those people's life, but released them from their military duty. They injured eyes, and then the person actually grew blind due to the wall rye. My father was very handsome and girls liked him. He didn't want to make himself ugly and he had one ear injured - they broke his ear drum and he had a hearing problem. My father avoided recruitment to the army, but he had a hearing problem from the rest of his life and it particularly bothered him at his old age, when he actually became an invalid. My father had a nickname of Shmatok ['a lump' in Ukrainian]. He was short and frail, - a piece, to be short. However, he was a handsome young man and girls kept looking at him. He was also ready to get married. The problem was, my father had an older sister. Her name was Rosia, she was born in 1885. Rosia was not married and was not popular with young men. She was ugly and very withdrawn. According to Jewish rules, a young man could not get married before his older sister did. My father had to wait for almost ten years before Rosia finally got married. Her husband Itzyk Farberman, a wealthy Jew, didn't stay long with Rosia. He divorced Rosia leaving their daughter Hana with Rosia. Since then Rosia always lived where my father lived. When my father decided to get married, he was about 30, and he could not find a nice girl he thought he deserved in Bershada: he had known all of them for a while and was not interested. So his parents invited Leya, a matchmaker, and she told them about a pretty girl from Chechelnik, a town near Bershada, and that my father could not have possibly found any fault with her. In early 1918 the bride and the bridegroom were married under a chuppah at the synagogue in Bershada. My father was a skilled jacket maker and worked hard.