

Mills In The Jewish Borough Yanovichi, Where Blyuma Perlstein Lived



These are mills in the Jewish borough Yanovichi, where I lived. The drawing is from the year 1926.

The Yanovichi settlement, where I was born, was located 30 kilometers from Vitebsk. It was a very cultural place, since literate and intelligent Jews and Russians lived there. Before and after the Revolution all children, both Jewish and Russian, went to school together and I never heard the word 'anti-Semitism,' because we all lived in friendship. Only the Kolonitsky family stood out. It was a Russian family of intellectuals and three people from this family were our teachers: two women and one man, Alexey Yakovlevich, thanks to whom we have the possibility to remember Yanovichi, looking at pictures made from his drawings.

Alexey Yakovlevich also taught me drawing, history, mathematics and physics. He lived the last years of his life in Moscow. My brother Aron also lived there and they kept in touch with each other. Alexey Yakovlevich gave all the pictures made from drawings, which he drew in Yanovichi, to my brother. My brother Aron died in 1977 and I inherited all these pictures.

There was a big three-storey mill in Yanovichi, which provided the big district with flour. Flour was also sold outside Yanovichi. The mill was located on the bank of the Vymnyanka River. In spring there was flooding so there was a dam in front of the mill from the side of the river bank. In order to protect the mill from the floating ice there was a paling in the water to the left. Normally when there was no flood it was possible to walk to the mill along the dam. The dam, which forced the water wheel, sustained the stable water level. Water passing through the logs and leaving the big pieces of ice behind, fell from a rather big height and set the mill wheels in motion. There was another steam mill behind the water mill, but it didn't always work, mostly the water mill was used. The mill was surrounded with a high wooden fence.