

Gherda Kagan's Maternal Grandmother Esphir Zivik With Her Children Yulia, David And Raisa



This is my maternal grandmother Esphir Zivik with her children Yulia, David and Raisa (on her grandmother's lap). This photo was made in Switzerland in Vevey town in 1907. Grandmother Esphir was born in Odessa in 1877. She finished private grammar school. My grandmother was shortsighted and said that she ruined her eyesight reading at night with a candle under a blanket. My grandmother was a pretty blond when she studied in grammar school. She said that when she was a senior student her teacher of drawing was not indifferent to her. Grandmother Esphir wore elegant clothes when she was young. My mother told me that she had beautiful outfits decorated with bugles. She kept her fancy gowns in a bog box and during a general clean up before Pesach she took them out to air them. There was a housemaid and a cook in the house. Esphir was so scared after a pogrom in Odessa in 1905 that my grandfather sent her and their three small children - Yulia, David and 6-month-old Raisa (my mother) to Vevey town in Switzerland for a year. They stayed in a boarding house. My grandmother Esphir wasn't religious and didn't observe any Jewish traditions. After the funeral of our religious great grandmother Yenta my 6-year-old mother asked during dinner: 'Is this a meat or dairy knife?' and my grandmother Esphir answered that there were no meat or dairy knife, there were only steel or silver knives. This was the end of religiosity in our family. After October revolution my grandmother was very unhappy about having to cook her first soup at the age of 45 after they lost a cook and wash the staircase in the corridor like all other tenants. Of course, she didn't approve of these 'niceties' of Soviet life and having to stand in line to buy food products. During horrible famine in 1921 grandmother Esphir took her family to Druzhelubovka Voznesensk district of Nikolaev region, to a former estate of Odessa artist Nikolay Kuznetsov where she visited when she was young. In 1920 a sovkhos was organized in this estate. They stayed there with their relatives' families for a year, working in the garden, keeping livestock, making brynza and mamaliga and managed to survive. .