Book Five

Maternal Line of Helen Stavrakis (Elena Vasileevna Sochanskaya)

Baba Lyena
around age 70.

Sergey, Baba Lyena, Anna, Helen, Olga and Vasily Ivanovich.

Anna Gregorievna Britchkina

INTRODUCTION

Helen Stavrakis (nee Elena Vasileevna Sochanskaya) (b. February 17, 1918 — d. October 19, 2013)

This chapter follows the maternal family line of the authors' mother, Helen Stavrakis, born in Kiev, Ukraine on February 17, 1918 (*NS*) and named Elena Vasileevna Sochanskaya at birth. During WWII, when she became a refugee, her official name was transcribed differently, changing in occupied Poland, then in Greece and, again later, in the US. One of the indignities refugees face is that our identity is forcibly changed without consent or control. You are not who you think you are or who you want to be.

Elena Vasileevna Sochanskaya around 1944. This photo was saved from a document issued probably in Nazi occupied Kiev.

In 1946, upon arrival in Athens, Greece, all her papers were issued in the Greek fashion and with the stroke of a pen, Helen lost her personal identity. She watched in numbed surprise as officials took her name away and replaced it with husband's on her documents. With the stroke of a pen she lost her identity and her Slavic ethnicity. She had never imagined that one day she would have a Greek surname, but there was no choice and that name remained with her for the rest of her life. In this biography, we will use the name that feels most appropriate to us based on the individual context. Thus, we will use different forms of her name and even "our mother" in a subjective manner.

As a cultural aside, our mother considered it rude to use the third person pronoun to refer to her in her presence. This rule she applied equally in Russian and English speech and we do not know where it originated. Did it come from her father's peasant village culture? Kievan city standards? The old Tsarist rules of address? She always corrected her children if any of us referred to her as "she" in "her" presence. We were taught that the only acceptable way to refer to our mother was as "my mother," "our mother," "Mama" or "Mom." This restriction did not apply to our father or grandparents. We hope "she" will forgive us, however, for using the third person pronoun occasionally in this work which is consistent with US forms of polite address and reference.

Helen was born in the middle of the bloody Russian Revolution which between 1917 and 1921 embroiled Ukraine in violence rarely witnessed in the history of western Civilization. During those few years Russia and its imperial dependencies experienced a brutal and sweeping social transformation that wiped out the old world and ushered in a totally new and idealistic political system that quickly turned repressive, violent, and totalitarian.

Helen's parents and grandparents were products of the Russian Empire. They lived and worked under Tsar, church, and empire, in Kiev, Ukraine, where they traded, manufactured, and formed the solid mercantile backbone of city and empire. When the Revolution turned their world upside down, her maternal grandparents

were retroactively condemned as enemies of the people and it was ordered that they be totally expunged from living memory on pain of death.

Helen was born into the new and repressive regime which molded a new reality and redefined the past. To accomplish this the Soviets rewrote history, casting past heroes as villains and criminalizing even the memory of one's parents, grandparents, and loved one's. Because internal theoretical arguments kept changing, so did the definition of heroes and villains. Lists of forbidden names, concepts, and even words were published and revised so that one had to be careful in any form of speech lest some innocent remark slip out that mentioned a blacklisted name or term. A slip of the tongue could result in arrest, torture or death. Thus, it was safer to just keep quiet and to forget.

During the years of Helen's youth, the members of the older generation went through the painful process of forgetting their past lives, their families and loved one's. Family photos were hidden or destroyed. Names of ancestors were silenced for one never knew who was condemned yesterday and would be retroactively censured tomorrow. Still, the past has a way of enduring and while the older generation was going through the painful process of forgetting Helen listened to whispers and pieced together what she could of her parents' past.

Over the last 40 years the authors have collected and preserved as many of these fragments as possible. In 1998, the authors engaged the distinguished historian Vitaly Kovalinsky of Kiev, Ukraine, to conduct research in the newly opened archives; soon, a wealth of rich and long buried information started to emerge.

One striking family pattern to surface was the recurrence of early widowhood over the generations. In at least five generations in Helen's maternal past, the men died young leaving the women to raise families, manage businesses and buy and sell property, which they did with surprising success. This pattern has also extended to Helen's daughter Olga and her granddaughter, Lyda.

Helen's ancestors were based for generations in the Podol District of Kiev, the riverside commercial area inhabited for centuries by leatherworkers, potters, traders, and other crafts people. In a society that favored males, our maternal ancestresses did extremely well for themselves for even the widowed women managed to reach and remain in the class designated as Merchant Guild #2, equivalent to upper middle class in the US today. Among them Kovalinsky discovered many industrious and successful tradeswomen who ran their own businesses, bought and sold property, and kept pushing their children up the social and economic ladder.

Our family and others like them made Kiev into the powerful cultural, religious and economic gem it became by 1917, when no less than five different factions battled to gain control of the city. In the end, the Bolsheviks won and it all fell to the Communists.

For all its cultural glitter, the Russian Empire was shockingly backward. Literacy was abysmally low; child mortality, astonishingly high; sanitation for the average person, non-existent. The unpaved streets of the Podol district turned to sticky mud with the spring thaw. Cholera and typhus swept through in epidemic

proportions. Cholera was such a killer that Vasily Ivanovich, Helen's father, used it as a curse word interchangeably with "the Devil!"

The Revolution changed all that, but progress came at a terrible and bloody cost which required the suppression of generations of family history. It could not, however, erase the entrepreneurial and creative spirit bequeathed to us by our ancestors.

Genealogical Charts Go Here

MISSING CHART

CHAPTER 1

Anna Gregorievna Britchkina Sochanskaya, Helen's Mother

(b. February 16, 1896, Kiev, Ukraine — d. June 1979 Elkton, MD, USA)

Anna Britchkina, Helen's mother, in 1912 at the time of her sixteenth birthday. She is wearing a gold pin which was given to her on that occasion. That pin was passed on to Olga, her granddaughter. It is gold with a small diamond, high quality, but simple in design.

Anna Gregorievna Britchkina, Helen's mother and the authors' grandmother, was born in Tsarist Ukraine, then called "Little Russia" or "Malorossiya," on February 16, 1896 (*NS*), to Gregory Britchkin and Elena Mihailenko. Her father, an emancipated serf turned successful merchant had risen from abject poverty to become a well-decorated and esteemed citizen of the Empire. Her mother had come from a long line of trade families and urbanized Cossacks based in the Podol District of Kiev.

She was the third of seven children, only four of whom survived to adulthood: besides herself, two older brothers (Nicolai and Ivan), and the youngest child, Sergey. Three other siblings, all boys, died in infancy and even their names are lost to us. None of the surviving brothers fared as well in life as Anna and she was the only one of the siblings who had a child. Her descendants, as of this writing, include three living grandchildren, one grandchild deceased as a young adult, and six great grandchildren, all living in the US.

At the time of her birth, Anna's family lived on fashionable Pushkin Street but we know nothing of their life until around 1898 when they moved into an elegant second floor ten-room apartment in their large custom-designed building spanning two large lots at #10 and #12 Malopodvalnaya Street which still stands in Kiev to this day but now as million dollar condos with a forgotten past. As one of the most modern multiunit buildings in the city, it had electricity, running water, and central heat. The family was cared for by servants and Anna had a nanny until her marriage at age 19.

Anna probably in her 30's. During the Soviet period it was dangerous to keep old photos especially for Anna's family who were prominent merchants. So, few photos of Anna's youth survive.

Anna was around 25 years of age when the Revolution swept her world away but even before that she seems to have born a worry on her face. She was not one to wallow in self pity but in the photos she seems to express anxiety.

Anna's life spanned three tumultuous and violent epochs in the history of Eastern Europe — Tsarist, Soviet, and Nazi. Her world crumbled and disintegrated not once but thrice, and each time she lost everything including some of her loved one's. In the 1940's, the family became war refugees, until 1950 when they all finally landed on the shores of the United States. By that time, the girl born into luxury had few material possessions, mostly dresses she had smartly refashioned from CARE package donations in war camps.

Yet, throughout this life ordeal, she always rose to the occasion and managed to adapt, to

learn new skills and to take advantage of whatever small opportunities presented themselves, all without complaint. But there was a cost. In the end, these experiences took an enormous emotional toll and she suffered from "moods" and bouts of depression for the rest of her life and often at night she screamed in her sleep. Today it would probably be diagnosed as PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.)

Anna's Youth

The Revolution had branded her father as "an enemy of the people" and relegated him to the ranks of the "incompletely annihilated bourgeoisie" and, by extension, his whole family. Thus, it was safer for everyone to keep silent about the past and for Anna it was also less painful. She never spoke of her youth and mentioned her father only rarely and in short remembrances, never whole conversations. Helen was born the year her grandfather died and she grew up hearing next to nothing about her own mother's youth.

For the first 28 year of her life, Helen remained inseparable from her grandmother with whom she shared a bedroom. But Baba Lyena was even more closed mouthed than her daughter saying almost nothing of the past. In fact, she stayed in the shadows and out of sight as much as possible for fear of bringing unwanted attention to her family.

What little she did learn of her mother's and family life came indirectly from descriptions of her grandfather, Gregory Britchkin, who ran the family much as the Tsar ran his empire — as autocrat and beloved father.

> What kind of person was he? Absolute ruler — a person who laid down the law and expected to be obeyed. He expected family members to rise early, get dressed immediately, and get right to work. He forbade lounging in bed.

(Anna maintained that discipline all her life. Her grandchildren rarely saw her in a housecoat or with her night braid down her back).

> At the same time, he himself never demanded anything of others that he did not require of himself. He ran his household and his businesses with efficiency and authority and never wanted to be or pretended to be anything but who he was. In today's words, he was the opposite of somebody who is "keeping up with the Joneses." Grandfather did not have the luxury of dreaming. All his life he set his goals and worked hard to reach them. He was a man of action, persistence, and determination who worked his way up from the lowest levels of society.
>
> Dyedushka did not believe in frivolities—which meant in a way, a very puritan sort of life.

Britchkin, an emancipated serf, was raised in rural Russia where males, even amongst the poorest serfs, ran their households with an iron hand and had complete power over their dependents. He was portrayed by family members as a caring, kind and fair person although he lacked outward warmth and tenderness and had no social graces, confirmed later by Kovalinsky (2014) in an archival description. He provided for his family generously but permitted no frivolities and or displays of conspicuous wealth typical of the nouveau rich, adhering instead to old Russian merchant rules of restrained affluence.

Anna was very fond of her father even though she described him as strict, humorless, and severe. He was never known to be mean, spiteful, or unkind, and neither was his daughter. She followed his rules regarding self discipline and even tried to pass them on to her grandchildren who were not particularly willing to give up sleeping in, partying on weekends, or washing in the mornings with cold water, among other things.

Anna, Helen's mother, probably taken in the US after 1950. The dress is typically dark and unpretentious but of good quality.

Helen always said of her mother, "She had golden hands." She could fix anything and in spite of a privileged upbringing, learned to cook, sew, and repair furniture and household items.

During the war, she remodeled secondhand clothing into elegant but discreet style. In this photo she wears the same golden pin with the diamond she received as a gift for her 16th birthday.

Britchkin clearly adored his only daughter. One of Helen's recollections from her mother demonstrates how fondly Anna remembered her own childhood encounters with her father.

> "My mother told me that every Sunday, Dyedushka (Gregory Ivanovich) would go down the corridor shouting, "Anitchka!" Her nanny would have her ready and waiting. The two of them would get into the carriage to be driven to the bakery for hot rolls (rosachki—kaiser rolls) which they would bring home to eat with milk and butter."

The women of the family were expected to dress modestly, tastefully, and expensively. Everything they owned was of top quality and fashion but very conservative. They wore dark, muted colors with dresses that covered the body up to the neck. Jewelry was discreet and minimal but of fine quality. Helen's grandmother, Baba Lyena, adorned her clothing only with one long string of jet beads.

According to Helen, Britchkin disapproved of the nobility, especially their flamboyant spending and profligate life styles and what he considered their loose morals. He was puritanical and considered it unseemly that women exposed their necks and flaunt expensive jewelry as did the nobility.

Nevertheless, Britchkin offered his family all the comforts of wealth. In the winter, Anna and her family lived in the warm and comfortable city apartment. Summers were spent in the country either in rented quarters or in a small privately owned summer home, known as a "dacha." It was the custom for city families of means to acquire a cottage outside the city where the children could run free and breathe in the salubrious country air for a few weeks or months every year.

Being a practical man, as Helen put it, Britchkin purchased a small working farm which they referred to as a *"Hutor"* (the generic Russian word for farm, farmstead, or summer hobby farm) in Svyatoshina, now a south-western suburb of Kiev. Ukraine, like the rest of the empire, had extremely poor infra structure and few roads and the ride out to the country took them along muddy dirt tracks in a horse and buggy. But here his sister, Elizaveta, grew vegetables during the summer months for the table and probably also for a winter stock as was local custom.

Svyatoshina, now a suburb of Kiev was reached along dirt tracks by horse and buggy.

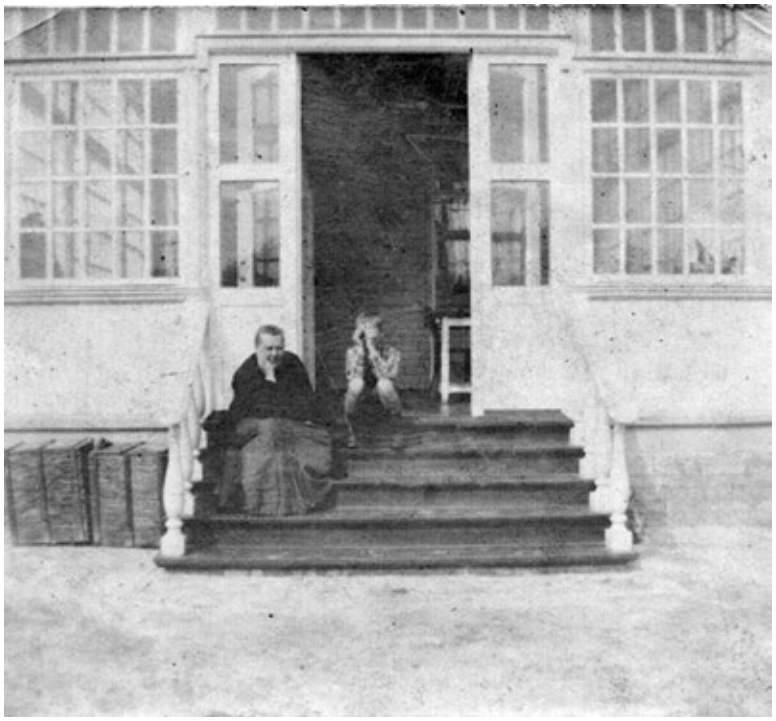
↑
Anna's mother, Baba Lyena, at the Hutor in Sviatoshina. Anna scratched out her mother's belly because one day she felt irritated that her mother was overweight which she felt made her look ugly. Her relationship with her mother was not a happy one.

→
Anna (left) and her cousin Dunyasha (Evdokia) (right front) and several other unidentified children at the "hutor" (country home with a small hobby farm), in Sviatoshina, a district about 16 km West of Kiev where many wealthy families had summer homes and gardens before the Revolution.

Dunyasha was the daughter of Britchkin's peasant sister Elizaveta whom he supported all his life. Elizaveta apparently ran the farm in the summer.

At times, the family also vacationed at a place near Poltava called Dinkanka, where a number of famous writers also had dachas. It is unknown if the family rented a cottage or owned one there, but we have photographs below of Baba Lyena at one of these two locations and a faded photo of a summer house.

Baba Lyena (Elena Mihailenko Britchkina) at Dikanka in central-eastern Ukraine close to Poltava. We do not know if they owned property or rented a summer house in or near Dikanka but the area was a popular summer holiday desination for prominent Kievans and was made famous by Gogol in his book, Evenings in Dikanka.



Baba Lyena on the steps of a dacha or summer house. We do not know if this was the Hutor at Svyatoshina or at Dikanka.

This house is a summer house or dacha but it is unknown where and whose but it belongs to this batch of photos.

Kievan families who could afford a dacha often spent summers together in communities that spanned generations and children developed long term "summer friendships." This custom persisted through Soviet times and is still a strong part of the culture to this day.

An unknown man is sitting on apparently the same bench on which Baba Lyena was photographed earlier. There is a boy next to him who seems to be the same as with Baba Lyena on the steps.

Education

Britchkin spared no expense on the education of his children. There was no public education in "Russia" (which included Ukraine) before the Revolution so schooling was available only to those who could afford it. For the boys, this meant tutors, private schools, and, ultimately, university studies.

Education for girls was still rare although increasing demand in the late 19th century saw a number of private secondary schools open up in the large cities including Kiev. In her early years, Anna was tutored in the genteel womanly arts of embroidery, needlework, sewing, drawing, piano and French. Later, she was enrolled in the Duchinskaya Gymnasia, an exclusive girl's school which catered to daughters of the nobility and wealthy merchants.

While this education was at first aimed at preparing young ladies to take their place in the homes of wealthy merchants and nobility, by about 1880 the curriculum had broadened to include academic and scientific subjects as well.

Duchinskaya Gymnasia

Founded in 1878 by Vera Nicolayevna Vashenko-Zaharchenko, an educated noble woman, the Duchinskaya Gymnasia was one of the first girls' high schools in Kiev. It emerged at a time when female education gained popularity among the upper classes and families started requiring certificates of higher education from future daughters in law.

In 1902 the gymnasium offered mathematics, history, literature, science, and classical languages and enjoyed a high reputation graduating many famous and accomplished women.

The founder, Vera Nicolayevna Vashenko-Zaharchenko (1840–1905) opened the first school for girls in Kiev, in 1878. When she fell gravely ill in 1896, A. T. Duchinskaya took over as head mistress.

The school got a mortgage and commissioned a building on at #7 Timofeevska Street (now #7 Kotsyubinski Street) which opened in 1901. Photo from 1902.

Serving both daughters of merchants and of nobility, the two classes were strictly segregated although never openly admitted.

The school's uniforms were dresses in a "lush green" and covered by the customary white apron. The gymnasium was closed after the Revolution and the building nationalized.

At that time, the marriage market for upper class women in Russia had started to put a premium on a broad academic education, which became a requirement for upward mobility. Wealthy families were looking for brides with knowledge, skills and training so that they could not only run households but also carry on intelligent conversation. One historical account states that in the early 1900s, a dowry alone was not enough to land a top marriage. The girl also needed to show a certificate of her educational achievement.

Thus, at Duchinskaya, Anna received a strong grounding in science and mathematics, subjects for which she had an exceptional aptitude. Years later,

after the Revolution and during WWII, this education served her and the family extremely well. In her late 30's, Anna returned to university with her husband's help, and earned a degree in Mining Engineering. During WWII and the flight through occupied Poland, she worked in the mines in the coal producing town of Katowice earning much needed income that supported the family.

Anna (second from left) with schoolmates. The girls are wearing the typical gymnasium uniform (from Tsarist times) which consisted of an apron over a dress in dark green or blue. This style was later also adopted by the Soviets.

Sometime later in her life, Anna discovered that at Duchinskaya, the daughters of nobility were graded more leniently and enjoyed special privileges than what was accorded to those of the merchant classes. The two social levels may even have been segregated at school.

Helen recalled that when her mother discovered this double standard, she felt hurt and angry. She observed that while her mother did not belong to the "lower" classes, neither was she fully accepted into the upper classes to which the Britchkin family aspired, and the situation left Anna with what Helen called "a kind of split personality" with respect to her class status.

Photo of a classmate of Anna's from Duchinskaya. On the previous photo this young girl is on the lower right.

Anna Britchkina (right) and a friend. Probably in the Duchinskaya Gymnasia where she went after she reached her early teens. The Gymnasium only took in girls of wealthy families and of nobility.

They learned hard science as well as languages and literature. Anna later learned that the daughters of nobles were judged by an easier standard but that served her well after the Revolution when she enrolled in university and went on to qualify as a Mining Engineer.

Anna (on right with the camera in her hand) and a "gymnasist" (classmate in the gymnasium).

At Duchinskaya Gymnasia the daughters of merchants were separated and treated differently from those of the nobility. She discovered this years later and it made her very angry.

Marriage to Vasily Ivanovich — an Unsuitable Match

Given the best education and a strict and affluent upbringing Anna had been groomed to marry into #2 Guild or higher. But fate dictated otherwise in a very curious twist. Much to her parents' horror and disappointment, Anna fell in love with an educated but rough and penniless peasant, Vasily Ivanovich Sochansky, from the village (*selo*) of Nichiporovka, about 100 km east of Kiev.

Vasily Ivanovic Sochansky photographed probably as a graduation picture in 1911 in Tomsk when he finished his engineering degree at the Technical University in Tomsk, Siberia.

It took him longer than usual to finish because he was not a steady student and was blacklisted as a trouble maker and revolutionary. He was rejected from the established universities but Tomsk had just opened its doors in 1903, as a first example of a rural regional school and was anxious to attract students.

This is one of the few pictures we have of Vasily Ivanovich in a western suit in Russia or Ukraine. He had a distinctive style of his own which was both rustic, casual and in good taste.

Vasily Ivanovich first appeared in Kiev in 1910 at the age of 32, having just finished his university education. Somehow, he managed to press his suit and Anna eventually fell in love with him. The details of their meeting and courtship remain unknown. But the liaison was unwelcome and apparently came as a surprise and a shock to her parents who considered Vasily Ivanovic totally unsuitable as a match for their daughter.

It is unclear how Vasily Ivanovich got to know Anna, much less speak to her. Being from quite different social classes they did not travel in the same social circles. Either it was a totally fortuitous event or, more likely, Vasily Ivanovich strategically planned it. In any case, their first encounter appeared totally by accidental.

Helen tells the story…

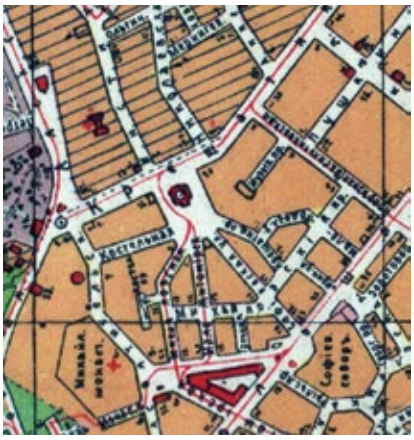
My father first saw my mother at a performance at the new Kiev Conservatory of Music where she played Chopin's Moonlight Sonata on the piano.

It seems that from that day on, he was determined to marry her. But first he had to find a way to make her acquaintance so that he might court her and make her fall in love with him. He could not simply present himself at Britchkin's door and ask to be introduced. That was not done. So he devised a plan that depended heavily on his considerable charm.

It was said, he rented a room in a building facing Anna's bedroom window where they could "accidentally" encounter one another through their windows. Looking at her through the window, he winked and smiled and worked to beguile her. In time she fell in love with him. When she told grandfather that she wanted to marry Vasily Ivanovich, her father and mother at first dismissed the notion out-of-hand. Grandfather would not even hear of it. However, she was stubborn, and eventually he gave her permission to marry.

In later years, Vasily Ivanovich loved to hear his wife play the Moonlight Sonata, sitting quietly, listening impassively, but paying close attention to the music.

There were a number of objections against Vasily Ivanovich as a husband for Anna. He was 18 years older than she was but that in itself probably made little difference as Britchkin was 24 years older than his own wife. The more serious problems were his class standing, character, and reputation. He was an outspoken revolutionary, rabble rouser, street fighter, and, worst of all, a penniless peasant. Even though his family owned land in his home village, it was not enough for more than bare subsistence. He had a good university degree in engineering, but at age 32 his accomplishments were negligible. He had no assets, no career, and no record of steady employment.



This is a map of Kiev from 1913, just a few years after Vasily Ivanovich arrived in Kiev and about five years before he decided to woo Anna Britchkina.

Further, his university degree was not top tier, as it came from the newly founded Technical University of Tomsk in Siberia, not one of the prestigious old urban institutions from which he had been banned due to "revolutionary" activities. It had taken him more than 14 years to complete a degree normally scheduled for four, because, it was said, he got distracted with his political involvement. However, to be fair, he struggled hard to get an education which his family could not afford. In order to make higher education possible, he first completed seminary school (bursa) in Poltava, which provided free schooling and served as a stepping stone to university.

On the plus side, Vasily Ivanovich was an impressive and extremely attractive man, even into his old age. Good looking and tall for the time, he stood straight and proud, looked people in the eye (except when it was advantageous to play the bumbling peasant), and presented himself well. Educated and well spoken, when he wanted to be, he spoke Russian fluently, conversed wittily, sang beautifully, and had a most mischievous twinkle in his eye when flirting with a lady. Glib, charming, well mannered when it suited him, he was hard to resist and very convincing.

Picture of Anna taken probably after leaving Kiev when she was worried and troubled. Today, we would probably say she suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome but back then psychological problems were considered the result of caprice and therefore treated as "bad behavior."

She suffered from periods of withdrawal Helen called "moods" and derided her for them.

When necessary and advantageous, however, he could grovel like an ignorant peasant, averting his eyes to the ground, stammering in the colloquial language and stinking of animal skins and tar. Like a good actor, he could establish a scene and play his role so well that one began to believe in the scene itself. Britchkin saw through the man's character and simply assumed Vasily Ivanovich was after his daughter's money.

Anna had fallen in love with Vasily Ivanovich and was determined to marry him. No amount of argument and pressure or dictatorial power could dissuade her. She wanted to marry Vasily Ivanovich and would not budge. Her parents objected but their entreaties fell on death ears. Anna would not budge and Britchkin finally gave in, which shows not only that she was inordinately stubborn and persistent, but also, that she had a great deal of influence over her autocratic father.

Later Anna would learn that her new husband also had a dark side to his character which he controlled when expediency demanded. He had temper tantrums, flew into rages when crossed, occasionally descended into one of his "dark moods,"

and at times was verbally abusive to his mother in law and his daughter. He never struck a woman or child, however, and at no time were his rages aimed at Anna. His behavior often was cruel and hurtful but Anna refrained from intervening and remained steadfastly silently at his side. To some extent her complicity in his mistreatment of her mother and daughter can be explained by the fact that Anna's family belonged to the hated bourgeoisie and the only thing that stood between them and execution was the peasant, Vasily Ivanovich.

After the wedding the couple moved into the family apartment along with the Britchkins and their servants. Britchkin himself even came to respect his son in law and began to collaborate on plans to build affordable housing for workers on Truhanov Island (across the Dnieper from the Podol). Vasily Ivanovich drew up the designs and Britchkin agreed to fund them. unfortunately, this project never came to fruition because of the Revolution.

Helen remarked that people like Britchkin could have made a real contribution to the country after the Revolution and that the annihilation of the merchant class was a terrible human waste.

> "It was a shame. Dyedushka Britchkin's ability was wasted by the Soviets. He could have been of use."

On February 17, 1918 (*NS*), Anna gave birth to her only child, Helen. In spite of the child and the joint project with his father in law, Vasily Ivanovich harbored a lingering suspicion that his in laws still mistrusted his motives and suspected him of marrying Anna for her money. This rankled him and continued to poison his relationship with his widowed mother in law for the rest of her life.

Helen wondered why Britchkin finally gave in and permitted the marriage. She often concluded that the most plausible explanation was that her father had conned her grandfather with his "big ideas." He talked expansively of doing social good, improving the living conditions of workers, and of building affordable clean houses. Helen, who never actually knew her grandfather, even thought that Britchkin came to admire her father. Without admitting that her father may have genuinely believed what he espoused, she used to say of him… "When he wished, my father could charm a snake."

Helen said…

> Grandfather got charmed by my father, who had a great "gift of gab." He was full of big ideas and told lots of tales about his projects. How could my grandfather understand this dreamer, my father, who got excited by his own stories?...My grandfather never had the luxury of dreaming—he was a practical man who set goals and worked hard to reach them all his life. He was a man of action, planning, persistence, and determination.

What made Britchkin change his mind? Both my father and grandfather shared a common struggle in a way. Both were out-of-step socially and this factor may have worked in Deda Vanch's (Vasily Ivanovich's) favor to overcome Britchkin's strong opposition to the marriage.

By "out of step socially" Helen meant that both had managed to rise out of their hereditary class and both aspired to prosperity accorded to the higher classes. Neither now fit into the social level into which he was born. Class standing was inherited. If you managed to break into a higher class you were not born into, you were always a "newcomer" or "usurper." One could enter a new class through economic standing or by decree, but acceptance by members of that class was not always forthcoming. Both these men had climbed the social ladder but now both remained outsiders both in the class of their birth and in the new social stratum they had entered. They were now misfits.

The tsarist class system was really a type of caste which, like in India, was sanctioned by religion and reflecting a social order ordained by a god. Those who followed the rules were blessed and the rules were more strictly applied to the poor than to the rich. Unlike a classic caste system, there were ways to scramble out of one's hereditary stratum although the choices and opportunities were strictly limited for each. Rising even to the next higher rung was inhibited by onerous custom and draconian law meant to prevent social mobility and to keep people "in their place." The church played a major role in upholding the status quo. Its supreme religious leader was the tsar and its controlling hierarchy came from the nobility who by no means treated the poor with equal consideration as their own class.

Strict rules defined behavior of each class regulating education, comportment, dress, and public spectacle. For example, in the 19th century, the law stated that a merchant was permitted only a single pair of horses for his carriage, whereas a nobleman could employ two pairs.

Vasily Ivanovich Sochansky in a document photo from occupied Poland or Greece. He was a peasant from the village of Nichiporovka.

Revolutionary, engineer, and dreamer, he met and married Anna Britchkina across the great divide of wealth and class but ended up without any of the benefits of his wife's status after the Revolution nationalized all private property and assets.

He ended up in the US with his wife, Anna, daughter Helen, and grandchildren where he died in 1963.

Britchkin and Vasily Ivanovich had a lot in common in that both were born into the lowest classes and both had struggled to climb the social ladder. But at birth each was presented with different opportunities and taught a totally different world view. As a serf, Britchkin bowed to religious and mystical power of tsar and church. He did not want to abolish the system but to rise in it and to get a bigger piece of the pie. So he learned how to play by its rules, and pulled himself up along the social and economic ladder.

As an emancipated serf, Britchkin had only two options open to him in his youth. He could continue to live in poverty as a peasant or with the help of a backer with some capital, develop some kind of money making scheme.

Education, the one sure method for rising in the system was unavailable to serfs even through the church which required a primary education. Villages had no

schools and Britchkin had been taught to read by his mother at home only to about 8th grade level (if that far). But he was clever with money and commerce. Somehow he managed to acquire startup capital and learned to invest wisely and thus he learned to play the system.

Vasily Ivanovich, on the other hand, came to believe the tsarist system had to be dismantled and replaced with a parliamentary democracy. He became politicized as a revolutionary and joined the Social Democratic party. The village had a primary school. Although not a diligent student, he did master the basic skills which then opened the door to the bursa, or seminary in Poltava. That education prepared youth for the priesthood but Vasily Ivanovich was not a believer and stopped short of ordination and then struggled to get into university.

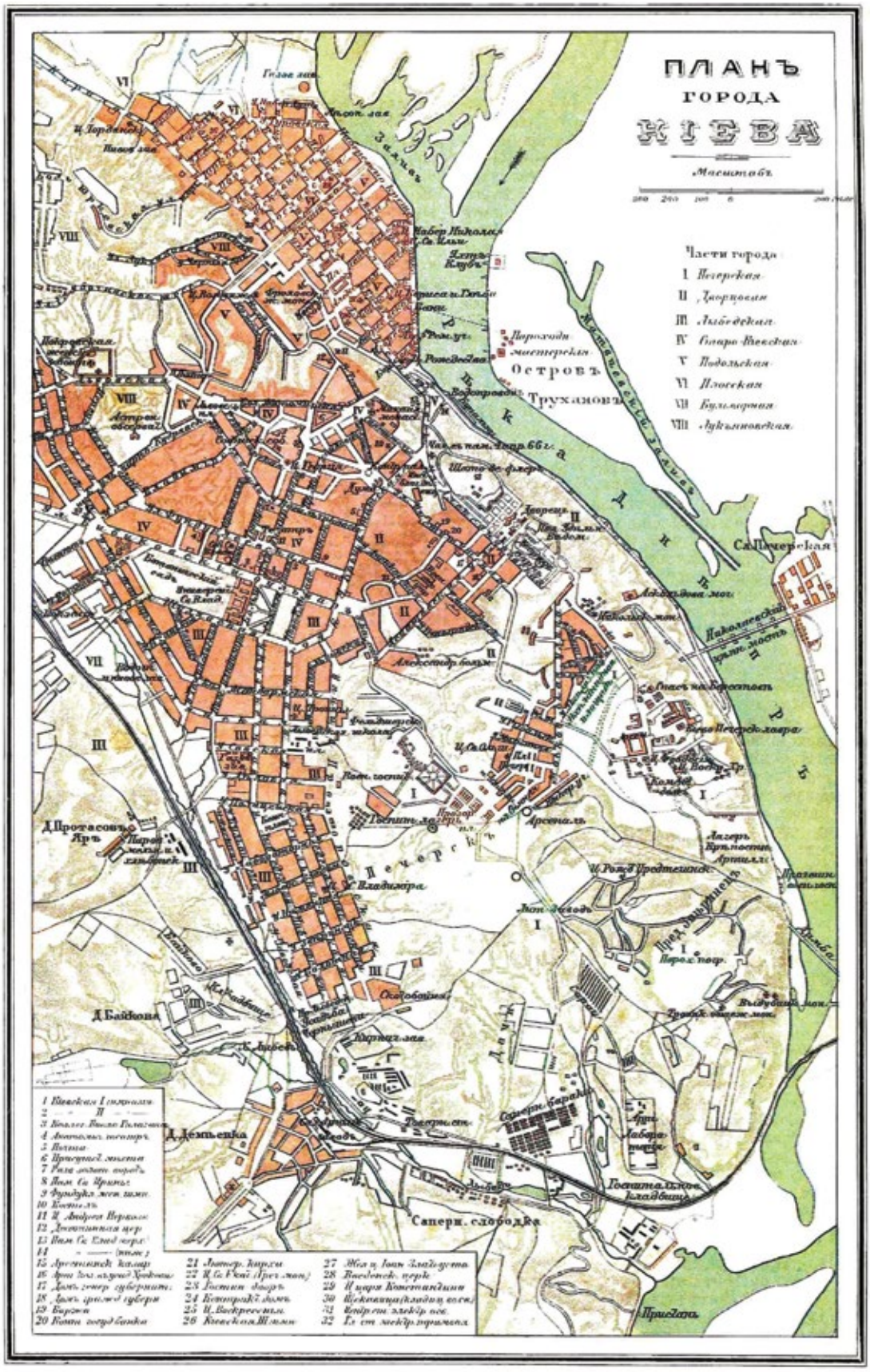
He was rejected from the prestigious urban universities in Kiev, Moscow and St. Petersburg but eventually managed to get into the newly established technical university established in Tomsk, Siberia in 1901. Most likely the school was trying to attract students and had more liberal admission policies. Plus, Siberia had a punitive reputation and the authorities considered it too close to exile to sustain student revolution activity. In this, however, they were mistaken. For it is here that Vasily Ivanovich met the future Bolshevik, Kirov. With all his extra curricular activities it took him fourteen years but in the end he earned a degree in engineering and went to Kiev to seek his fortune.

Helen's Perspective on Her Parents' Marriage

Helen always maintained that her father had married her mother for her money. When describing the events in English, she used the words "gold digger" and "opportunist" to explain his marriage. She considered it contradictory for a man who espoused socialism and revolution to marry into a wealthy merchant family, as if it were a betrayal of everything he stood for.

To Helen, her father's marriage was difficult to justify in terms of socialist doctrine as she learned it in school. She was educated in the Soviet period under Bolshevik doctrine which stipulated that the bourgeoisie could not be integrated into the revolution and had to be "annihilated" (e.g. "killed"). However, her father had been a social democrat and they believed in a democratic transition to socialism in which the bourgeoisie would play a prominent role. Thus, marriage into a bourgeois family would have been consistent with his political ideology but appeared opportunistic to his Bolshevik era daughter.

Vasily Ivanovich believed the system was inherently unjust and unequal and had to be replaced with a democratic and fair one. That is what Helen meant when she said her father was a "dreamer." He supported revolution but at the same time, he had a kind of schizophrenic approach to the existing social order. He refused to condone the pre-revolutionary social rules by which Britchkin was willing to play, but he had to play by them to survive within the tsarist society. He learned to manipulate the system and his education gave him access to revolutionary intellectual circles and, ultimately, to work as an engineer.



Old Kiev about the time Anna was growing up. Her house was just west of the Duma and a bit north and west of the Roman Numeral II. To the left of the # II the Kreschatik runs almost north and south. The Podol is situated at V and VI.

In the end, for Vasily Ivanovich revolution in Russia turned out a tragic disappointment. Nothing he believed in and worked for came to pass. Instead of improving his life, instead of ushering in a new era of peace and justice, Vasily Ivanovich ended up caught in a nightmare for which he felt some responsibility and took some of the blame.

When the family lost everything in the Revolution, Helen believed her father took it out on her mother, sending her to get a higher education, then arranging for her to work as a mining engineer, so she would provide for the family and he could sit back and do nothing. She saw it as a way for her father to "get back" at her mother for losing the wealth he had been entitled to in the marriage.

And yet, she also knew that he fervently believed in the emancipation of women, at least as far as earning a living was concerned. As a man of his times he could not quite envision a world where women were totally equal. And when he told his women they had to become independent of him, he decided what that independence meant and they obeyed. Vasily Ivanovich espoused socialist doctrine for *his* women, but it was a conflicted embrace.

Thus, Vasily Ivanovich made sure both wife and daughter got the highest possible education in fields that were in demand. For two years he tutored his gently raised wife, when she was already an adult, to prepare her for entering the university program to study mining engineer. He called in favors and pulled strings to get Anna accepted into the new program in the Donbass hiding her bourgeois background.

He successfully steered Helen into chemical engineering for which she happened to have been exceptionally well suited.

Helen saw her father through the lens of her adversarial relationship with him. Father and daughter remained together all their lives but they each put the other down. He would give her no credit for her achievements, and she considered him a lifetime failure and blowhard. Helen always thought of her father as totally incapable of completing a project of any kind. To her, he was a free spirit and a loser.

Anna and Vasily Ivanovich's Enigmatic Relationship

Anna and Vasily Ivanovich were married on January 8, 1917, most likely in St. Sophia's Cathedral where Britchkin served as a *Starosta — "elder"* — and financial patron at the time. Dowries and arranged marriages were still in vogue but by marrying a poor peasant Anna was breaking all the rules. No dowry was ever mentioned in any of the recollections.

After the wedding, so the story goes, Britchkin boarded up the window through which Anna had received Vasily Ivanovich's flirtatious attentions in a fit of pique (or perhaps in this case, peak). In 1995, the authors returned to Kiev and tried to find the purported window but the building across the street had been replaced by a dark and ominous KGB monstrosity of the 1950's, so there was no way to confirm the story.

The couple moved into the ten-room family apartment. This was probably the most affluent quarters Vasily Ivanovich ever inhabited in all his life and the last time Anna enjoyed this level of comfort. According to the 1917 city census, eight family members, two renters, and two servants lived in the Britchkin apartment at the time. The census does not specify who the renters were. (See the annex for a copy of the census)

Anna and Vasily Ivanovich had a long yet difficult life together. They endured the Russian Revolution and survived WWII, flight from their homeland, life in war camps, Greece, and then the long journey to the US. They had only one child, our mother Helen. In the early Soviet Period, abortion was the primary form of contraception and many women had multiple abortions. Anna herself had six. They must have been conducted by good medical practitioners because she got pregnant again and again.

Soviet document issued to Anna and Vasily shortly after their marriage.

Anna generally addressed Vasily by his patronymic, "Vasily Ivanovich" although in the US she sometimes affectionately called him "Vasenka." He called her "Noonik." She used the formal "vi" form (equivalent to "vous" in French and "Usted" in Spanish) part of the time and at other times used the familiar "ti" form of address. He always used the familiar "ti."

He ordered her about, often quite rudely but it never seemed to phase her. He would indicate where he wanted a table or chair and she would bustle off to do his bidding, but she did it voluntarily. She was always good natured and even though he seemed to order her around, she was in no way subservient to him. If she did not want to do something, she simply refused. If he was in command, it was because she permitted him that power and it was not a banket license. She never feared him, and he never ever used physical force although there were rumors of his having been a brawler in his youth.

No one ever witnessed him complimenting or criticizing her. He never directly said anything insulting or demeaning to her although he did not hold back when speaking to his daughter or, in the early years, to his mother in law. He admired Anna's mathematical skills and was proud of her appearance. Later in life, after they had moved to Newark, Delaware, the two of them made a handsome couple as they walked up Elkton Road to Main Street, Anna dressed up with her hat and dark stylish dress; he, in a worn but well cut sport jacket over a plaid wool shirt. She would put her arm through his, but other than that, they never showed affection in public. They also slept in separate single beds as far back as the authors remember.

Photo of Anna Gregorievna Britchkina from some document, probably during the war in occupied Poland. Her face bears the expression of worry and sadness.

She had periods of withdrawal when she refused to communicate and withdrew from all interaction in response to some feeling of injury or slight, which often could not be determined. Today, it would probably be described as PTSD.

It would not be surprising for the flight from Kiev was but one of the many displacement traumas and total life losses she suffered.

Vasily Ivanovich cared for his wife deeply, respected her, and thoroughly depended upon her. Once the family had left Kiev in 1943, he was a man totally deflated and stripped of all status. He had no country, no village, no land, no influence, no linguistic skills which would have made his education useful, and a stubborn coarseness that prevented his adapting to other societies.

Here, Anna rose to the occasion, handled daily tasks, took jobs, kept house, translated, and managed Vasily Ivanovich and his moods. And he seemed to love her all the more for taking charge.

One of the few photos of Anna smiling and relaxed. The made her own clothes and had a tremendous aptitude for all things mechanical and technical. Educated in adulthood as a mining engineer, Anna excelled in math.

On the practical side, she could refurbish furniture and anything around the house. Helen used to say, "my mother had golden hands." She learned to cook in adulthood by trial and error, experimenting until she mastered the old traditional Ukrainian dishes.

Anna as a Person

The authors remember their grandmother Anna as a solidly built small woman with slightly bowed legs. Her US Declaration of Intention states that in 1951 she was 5'3" tall and weighed 160 lbs. Her complexion is listed as "dark", her hair as "brown" and her eyes as "blue." This is not quite accurate for her eyes were very light, almost gray and her skin was fair. Her hair was always described as ash blond by Helen. She stood out among the rest of the family, who are all "dark," for her light eyes and white skin and two of her grandchildren and several of her great grandchildren are blond with blue or light brown eyes.

Her grandchildren remember her as handsome and strong, with long thin greying ash blond hair, which she wore pinned up in an Edwardian knot on the top of her head. At night she plaited it into a braid down her back. She always wore a corset, which appeared as constricting as body armor to the authors, but her waist remained somewhat thick.

Anna always paid attention to her appearance and was very self-disciplined. If she ever gained weight, she simply ate less until she reached the desired result.

The authors remember her as physically strong and capable of handling considerable loads. Once, when she was already over 60, she easily carried a heavy table up a flight of stairs.

After the revolution, the gently raised Anna had to learn new skills. She never mastered the art of housekeeping and cleaning was not her forte. She did learn to cook all the Ukrainian foods her husband was accustomed to. Instead of following recipes, however, she approached cooking through trial and error and the authors remember many imperfect pots of borsch and sandy textured pork sausages before she managed to get the techniques and proportions right.

She was particularly talented in technical and mechanical ways. In the US when the family had little money, she learned to repair and reupholster furniture salvaged from the trash. She fixed beds, chairs and tables, repaired lamps and even occasionally tacked small appliances.

Helen said

> " ...my mother had "golden hands." She had an aptitude for organizing and carrying out projects that demanded manual labor and complex organization".

At the end of WWII, in 1945, when Anna and Vasily were in the UNRRA camp in Italy, she learned a new skill. She designed and made very sophisticated toys. Making patterns out of old newspapers she created wonderful stuffed animals, clowns, and other dolls from old army blankets and bits of cloth discarded from remodeled dresses donated through CARE.

Olga remembers the excitement of a box arriving from Baba Anya to their dismal shack outside of Athens. It was filled with wonderful and things, the most beautiful things she had ever seen in her life. One such masterpiece has survived to this day, Mischa, the teddy bear with swiveling head and limbs attached by hand made metal pins. There was also a clown which can be seen in another book on the photo of the family departure from Athens, and the elephant seen below.

Anna and Vasily in Italy in the UNRRA camp 1946. Helen and Peter had to leave them behind when they left for Athens and then sent for them and they arrived on April 7, 1947.

Anna is holding the teddy bear and elephant she made and sent to Olga in Athens from army blankets using a combination of patterns which she acquired and made herself. The teddy bear has movable arms, legs and head and is still alive and well in Olga's possession.

Gregory Britchkin, father of Anna, grandfather of Helen, from an encyclopedia of business leaders (a Who's Who) published in Ukraine around 1910.

He was born a serf in Kaluga Province of Russia around 1849. Emancipated in 1861 he somehow acquired capital and became a wealthy merchant in Kiev where he died in 1918 during the Russian Revolution . His property was then siezed and his surviving family were reduced to poverty and persecuted.

CHAPTER 2

Gregory Ivanovich Britchkin, Anna's Father, Helen's Grandfather

(b. ca. 1848, Kaluga, Russia — d. September 15, 1918 Kiev, Ukraine)

Anna's father, Gregory Ivanovich Britchkin, (Helen's grandfather), lived a true rags to riches story that ended in a tragic irony. He was born a serf (in bondage) between 1848 and 1851 in Kaluga Province, Russia, located along the north-eastern border of Ukraine. After emancipation in 1861 he rose to wealth and prominence only to lose it all in the Revolution. The new regime then labeled him an "enemy of the people" and all memories of his life that could be erased or buried, were. Even his exact birth date is unknown.

His burial record lists his age at death on September 15, 1918 at age 70. His wife always said she was 24 years his junior and she was born in 1873, which puts his birth in 1848 or 1849. Other documents list his birth in 1850. It is possible that he himself did not know his exact year of birth. Neither villagers nor rural priests in old Russia were literate and dates of birth of the serfs were not necessarily important.

Of his parentage we know only that his father's name was Ivan Ivanovich and that he died in 1863, two years after emancipation. From the patronymic we know that Britchkin's paternal grandfather was also named Ivan and nothing more. There the record ends, for serfs being property, their ancestry was of less consequence to the church or state than the pedigree of a dog.

According to city records in the Kiev archives and various short biographical publications, Britchkin only had three years of schooling at home, taught by his mother to approximately eighth grade level.

Painting by Ivan Izhakevich (1864–1962): Serfs being exchanged for dogs. (Photo credit: Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine)

Archival records indicate the family was owned by Count Olsufiev for whom Britchkin's father, Ivan Ivanovich, worked from childhood, as his ancestors had done for generations before him.

However, a record from another archival document (Kiev Archive), states that Britchkin himself labored in the factories of the Maltsov family (also spelled "Maltsev") hauling sand from an early age for the glassworks. We do not know what the relationship may have been between the Olsufievs and the Maltsovs, but the Maltsovs were famous for producing high-end glass and crystal pieces for the wealthiest households in the country. It is possible the two families collaborated or that the glass works were owned under one name and the land under another.

Emancipation of serfs in Russia took place in 1861 at which time all of the Empire's people became free and were granted citizenship, although to take advantage of freedom, a serf had to reimburse his owner between 2,500 and 5000 rubles for the loss of his labor (Jerome Blum, Lord and Peasant in Russia, Princeton, 1961). This was an enormous sum at the time, and we do not know when or how the Britchkins managed to pay it.

Russian Serfdom

In Russia the institution of serfdom developed in the 15th century when it became profitable for landowners to tie peasants to land in a system of bondage that assured a supply of free and steady labor for agricultural production. In areas where land was poor and agriculture unproductive, landowners of the 18th century turned to industrialization, using unfree peasant labor for production and for trade of commodities. In the industrial central zone metallurgy, manufacturing of flax cloth, glass and trade served as the main sources of income.

Land was owned and controlled by members of the upper class by birth right. When industrialization began, owners forced their serfs to apply their talents and abilities to the establishment of factories. Serfs provided free labor that supported the nobility but they were also expected to provide for their own needs and to pay rents which constituted 30-50% of their personal income.

Serfs were legally bound to the land and entire villages were bought and sold with the transfer of land. In the industrial belt, landlords encouraged serfs to start businesses and become wealthy for rich serfs could pay more taxes and thus cover greater extravagances for their owners.

Thus the more entrepreneurial men became middle men for manufactured goods while women wove flax during the winters although they were permitted to keep their own profits.

Those who managed their businesses skillfully enlarged their homes and sent their children to tutors or to the rare village schools. Some became quite wealthy and purchased their freedom long before emancipation in 1961.

The lot of the serf depended largely on the benevolence of the landlord although they themselves rarely worked but selected serfs to manage their affairs for them. Cruel masters treated their serfs harshly and extracted huge rents and taxes.

Emancipation in the Russian Empire came in 1861, although most serfs were not entirely freed until several years later. Further, they were required to compensate their masters for the loss of their (free) labor by paying 2000 to 5000 rubles — an enormous sum at the time.

The Bargain by Nikolai Nevrev (Sale of a serf girl) 1865. Serfs were attached to the land by law, much like a tractor or building might be. Therefore, they were supposed to be sold with land and remain in their villages but wealthy landowners did not care and since they controlled the legal system, they often bought and sold people individually, especially girls the landlord may have wanted for personal "use." (Photo credit: Wikipedia.)

A 1907 painting by Boris Kustodiev depicting the muzhiks listening to the proclamation of the Emancipation Manifesto in 1861 (photo credit: historytoday.com)

After emancipation, Britchkin completely disappears from the public record only to resurface in 1882 in Kiev, at the age of about 33, as an established businessman with capital. During those "lost years" Gregory Britchkin must have been extremely active for he had managed to move up from humble serf to wealthy merchant, in a matter of two decades.

Occasionally, and with the permission of kind owners, serfs could accumulate wealth and even pass it on to heirs, but the Britchkin family lived in poverty as evidenced by Gregory's menial occupation and low level of education. So how Britchkin managed to accumulate enough capital to start him on his road to success in Kiev remains a mystery. Presumably, he found a backer or an opportunity to serve tsar and state.

From 1882 onward, Britchkin rose steadily up the social and economic ladder, something that was extremely difficult in tsarist Russia. Records who that in 1882, he bought a luxury glass and porcelain shop from the merchant Nikolai Aleksandrovich Barsko in the heart of the main upscale commercial center of Kiev on the corner of Kreschatik and Proreznaya Streets at # 28/2, on premises leased from the merchant Henry Karlovich Klugkist.

He renamed his newly acquired business "G.I. Britchkin" and expanded his inventory to include fine glassware, porcelain, bronze, crystal, crockery and lamps. There is some mention in one of the records that he also manufactured porcelains which he sold in his store, but we found no other evidence of a factory. Presumably he had acquired a deep knowledge of the glass and crystal manufacture and marketing from his period of bondage and from his father and grandfather.

Britchkin's passport. The stamp on the left side shows that he was in Warsaw in 1913. The right side identifies him and states that the passport it perpetual and does not expire.

Inside page showing a stamp on 1911

According to Kovalinsky (The Fate of Temples — Kiev 2014: 45) "He was very accommodating and gave credit to crockery makers, furriers, and building owners. He is an honest person who speaks his mind and sometimes comes across as very harsh and serious with shy clients." This seems to indicate that he began making financial transactions at this time as well.

Helen was told that Britchkin often traveled abroad and imported crystal and glass from Czechoslovakia. He also conducted business with the French Bank L'Urbain et la Seine, through which he purchased a life insurance policy for his wife and daughter, Anna, as beneficiaries. As the situation in the empire became increasingly unsettled, he wanted to ensure that his womenfolk would be taken care of in case they had to leave the country.

Many years later his son, Sergey, found a copy of that insurance policy in the bank in Paris at the request of his sister Anna, but after that, the paperwork disappeared and attempts to trace it proved futile. Helen was convinced that the policy covered all female descendants even after his death and was to be paid out in gold. She also held the suspicion that her uncle Sergey's step-daughter, her good friend Natasha, held on to that paperwork after Sergey's death.


Большой ламповый и посудный
магазинъ
И. И. Новикова
бывш.
Г. Брычкина
Кіевъ,
Крещатикъ 28, рядомъ съ почтой. Телефонъ 1388. Фирма сущ. съ 1861 г.
Всегда въ громадномъ выборѣ:
Фарфоръ, фаянсъ, хрусталь, бронза, лампы, люстры, канделябры, письменные приборы, подсвѣчники, часы, вазы, фигуры, статуэтки, сервизы: столовые, чайные, кофейные и хрустальные для вина, англійскіе умывальные приборы, электрическія лампы и абажуры.
Большой кухонный отдѣлъ посуды.
Никелевыя и эмалированныя кострюли, самовары, кофейники, подносы, ножи, вилки и проч. Спиртовыя лампы, горѣлки, кухни и утюги. Мельхіоръ.
Безпрерывное полученіе новостей.
Адресъ для писемъ и телегр.: Кіевъ, Крещатикъ 28, Новикову.
Предметы роскоши для подарковъ.

This flyer announced the sale of the crystal and porcelain shop owned by Britchkin from 1882, to Novikov. The year of the sale is unknown. Thereafter, Britchkin then went into banking and finance. (obtained from the Kiev Archive).

The purchase of the crystal business in 1882 marked the beginning of Britchkin's meteoric rise in wealth and status. He eventually sold the shop to Novikov (see announcement flyer in this chapter; date unknown), and then turned to banking and finance where he continued to climb the ladder of success and eventually held assets in retail, banking, and real estate.


Map of the center of upper Kiev in 1911.
(Photo Credit: International Images)

He was the first head of the Kiev Mutual Loan Society and an elected member of the Bill-Lending Committee of the Government Bank of Kiev, the candidates of which were personally selected by the Minister of Finance.

He was also active in a number of business organization including: The Trade and Manufacture Society, Board of the Volsko-Kamskov Bank, First Chair of Kiev Society of Joint Credit, and the Society of Selling and Manufacturing.

Kreschatik Street around 1900. It is on this street at #28/2 near the corner of Proreznaya Street that Britchkin had his crystal and porcelain shop.

Today at this location and address stands the Chateau Robert Doms, a brewery and restaurant, although the numbers may have been moved around a bit. (Photo credit: https://fineartamerica.com/featured/krestchatik-street-in-kiev--ukraine--ca-1900-international-images.html)

Kreschatik mean "The Crossing" because of the intersecting ancient trails representing the old Viking trade routes from the Baltic to Constantinople. (Photo Credit: Library of Congress from Library of Yaroslav the Wise.)

Close up of Gregory Britchkin's face from the previous group photo of the Kiev Duma members.

In 1898 Britchkin served as "Candidate" for the Board of Directors for the Kiev Land Bank. One source states he was the first director of a specialized bank, located at Kreschatik #7, which provided loans for small business development, which may or may not be one of those mentioned above.

He contributed to a number of philanthropic and developmental organizations in the city, serving on the board of the "Free hospital of Tsar Nikolai for unskilled laborers." The list of organizations and "gold medals" he received "for merit" is long and is included in the Annex in Russian as found in the Kiev Archive.

Once he was economically established, he went into politics where his success was equally spectacular. Kovalinsky writes that Britchkin served as chair (speaker) of the Kiev City Council, *Duma*, from 1898 to 1917 when it was disbanded by the Revolution.

← Gregori Ivanovich Britchkin on an official photo of the members of the Kiev City Council, or Duma. He was elected in 1898 and served for the next eight years.

Emancipated from serfdom sometime after 1861 he appeared in Kiev in 1882, purchased a crystal and porcelain business on the main commercial street and eventually prospered enough to qualify for Guild #2.

He rose in social standing through his philanthropic, civic and political participation so that eventually he was awared the status of Hereditary Esteemed Citizen of the Empire in 1910 (Kovalinsky archival data).

The original Duma building was located on the Dumskaya Ploschad (now ***Maidan Nezalezhnosti***) on the Khreschatik street. Built in 1878, the Soviets used it for the regional executive committee headquarters for the Communist Party. The original heart of the government in Britchkin's time was located just a block from his house. (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

The list of awards and commendations he received is long and distinguished. In 1902, he received the title of Esteemed Citizen (*Potchotni Grazhdanin*) and on the 9th of November 1910 was granted the additional title of Hereditary Esteemed Citizen of the Empire (*Potomstveni Potchotni Grazhdanin*) which was extended also to his wife, children and descendants in perpetuity placing them (and us) into the ranks of the nobility, albeit without a ranked title and lands. It was an honorary title established in 1832 specifically to reward merchants for service to the Tsar.

During WWII the Duma was blown up in the 1941 in explosions set off by the Soviets themselves. The building was irreparably damaged and had to be taken down. (Photo credit: Wikipedia).

Britchkin had set out to rise within the system and reap its benefits and he succeeded admirably. In line with his upbringing in bondage, he always remained faithful to God, Tsar, and Mother Russia which were inseparable. As most serfs, Britchkin bowed to "God's law" which was enshrined on earth by the institution of the tsardom over all the Russias. The position of "tsar" held such an exalted place in Russian society and its psyche that blind acceptance of the holy superiority of Russia and all things Russian remained unshaken even though neither the Tsar nor the Tsaritsa were at all Russian but German. They spoke English at home and German with friends and relatives.

Historical records found in the Kiev Archive by Kovalinsky confirmed family knowledge that Britchkin was a Russian "nationalist" and believed in the superiority of "Great Russians" or "White Russians" over all other ethnic groups. This belief guided many of his political and business decisions and led to his creating a small credit program in the bank where he had an ownership stake, for which only "White" Russians were eligible.

The Government Bank on Institutskaya Street, where Britchkin served on the board of directors.

He was a shareholder and investor in one of the banks he managed but we do not know which. (Source unknown).

A contemporary businessmen's publication shows that Britchkin gained a high reputation in trade, business and financial circles. He participated in commissions for the development of Kiev and especially worked with financial institutions which provided loans to small ethnic Russian businessmen "who, without this assistance, would have had a hard time competing against Jewish firms who controlled the market." (Business Encyclopedia of Merchants, Kiev ca. 1910).

Britchkin's Methodical Life Plan

If we follow Britchkin's social and economic rise, it becomes clear that he was a methodical man who developed a plan, set goals and then worked for them with single minded application. This plan becomes evident when we list his life accomplishments in chronological order. He took his first step in the "lost period" prior to 1882, of which we know nothing at all, but after that, his plan become clear.

He started in the glass business, a technology and industry he knew well. He then progressed to banking and finance. From there he entered politics and rising to become speaker of the Duma (City Council).

Once he was financially established, and well positioned in the merchant class, he commissioned a large apartment house to be constructed in the heart of the religious and business district of Kiev. In line with his business networking, he rented two apartments in that building, a total of 16 rooms, to the sugar company, one of the biggest businesses in Ukraine.

He had always supported philanthropic work but now, at the height of his success he entered the lay hierarchy of the church pouring money into the renovation of the altar of the Cathedral of St. Sophia. Along the way, he joined various civic clubs, some with political and pro-tsarist agendas.

Britchkin's Life Timeline*	Year	Comment
Born	If his death certificate is right, he was born in 1848; if his wife was 24 years younger, the other dates are off by a year. Her birth in 1873 seems consistent so he was probably born in 1849 or 1850.	Dates given in the records include 1849, 1850, 1852. None of the dates line up exactly.
Appears in Kiev — buys glass shop	1882	
Becomes speaker in the Miska Duma	1883–1917	
Becomes Starosta of St. Sophia	1891	
Married Elena Mihailenko (born January 5, 1873 and baptized May 1, 1873)	1893 (or 1892) — He was 24 years older; however, she said she was 19 when she married)	Baba Lyena said she was 19 when she married. We know he was 42 or 43 which puts his birth date most likely at 1850
Nicolai is born (First child, son)	1894 — (died in Czechoslovakia possibly 1939-1942)	Died in Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1946 of heart attack; archive has his birth in 1895. No children.
Ivan is born (Second son)	1895 — (died in Czechoslovakia possibly around 1930-1936	Murdered by hanging; archive has his birth in 1896. No children.
Anna born (daughter)	2/16/1896 (died in MD, USA 1979)	Alt date: 1895 from the Kiev Archive reported by Kovalinsky. This date was not used in her US documents. One daughter, Helen, four grandchildren, 6 great grandchildren.
First chair of Kiev Society of Joint Credit	1898–1917	
Starosta of St. Sophia Cathedral	1901–1918	He was the last Starosta. After the revolution the Cathedral became a secular museum.
Potchotni Citizen	1902	
Duma speakers (city position)	1898–1917	
Sergey born after 3 children who died young	1903, Kiev; died 1954, NY, USA	Married later in Paris. No children but had a step child, Natasha Kravchenko.
Pays for St. Sophia Renovation	1902 et seq.	Altar and Iconostasis
Hereditary Potchotni Citizen	1910	

*Dates vary in the different sources. We use dates as the family calculated them whenever possible.

Britchkin Marries Elena Ivanovna Mihailenko (Baba Lyena)

Once he was established and economically secure, Britchkin was ready for a wife. In an arranged marriage he took the 19 year old Elena Ivanovna Mihailenko (Baba Lyena) to wife, a match that was negotiated by her widowed mother. Helen was told by her grandmother that

> "She came with a dowry of 20,000 rubles which Britchkin matched. In those days that sum was considered substantial."

Baba Lyena came from an old well established Kievan merchant family based in the craft and trade district known as the Podol. For at least four generations, her ancestors belonged to Merchant Guild #2 and lived on or near Vozdvizhenskaya Street and Vozdvizhenskaya Lane. They owned houses and bought and sold property there from at least 1730 until the Revolution.

His in laws descended from a mix of Ukrainian Cossacks and local traders who, like most Kievans, spoke Russian as well as Ukrainian. Russian was the official language of the empire. Britchkin certainly considered them "Russians" for he lent his mother in law money through the bank under the "Great Russian only" eligibility rules.

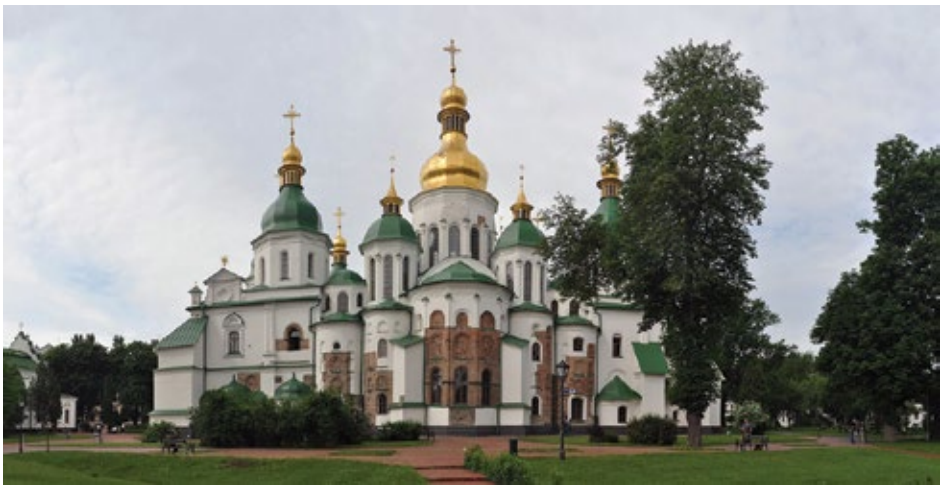
In the early years of their marriage, the young Britchkins lived on Pushkinskaya Street in a highly desirable location in the upper old city. The street is only two blocks long and the exact house remains unknown but it is likely that the building still exists. On this street also stood the hospital where Britchkin's great granddaughter, Olga Stavrakis (one of the authors) was born. That building now houses the Kiev Endocrinological Institute.

Britchkin Moves Into Church Politics

Britchkin's next move took him into church affairs where in 1891 he accepted the prestigious secular post of Starosta of St. Sophia Cathedral. Technically translated as "elder" the post came with the responsibility of maintaining the grounds and managing the work of maintaining the buildings and the church grounds which was carried out by volunteers and laborers.

The church was as close to the source of power as one could get in the Russian Empire and it is likely that it helped make the Mihailenko family look favorably upon an offer of marriage to young Elena whom he married just two years later.

For the following nine years, he continued to cement his position in the secular church hierarchy and then in 1902 he undertook the enormous financial responsibility for the renovation of the iconostasis and altar which had fallen into neglect and disrepair.



St. Sophia (Sobor, or Cathedral), modelled on the church of the same name in Istanbul, was founded in 1011 by St. Vladimir, the Varangian prince of Kiev who brought Christianity to the Slavs. It has undergown many renovations and additions since its founding and has at times, suffered from periods of war and neglect.

Under the Soviets it was saved from demolition by converting to a museum which it remains to this day. (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

This was no small project for just the iconostasis alone, made to look like a fence, had silver gates weighing 140 kg (Kovalinsky: The Fate of Kiev Temples 2014:4-41). In Orthodox churches, the iconostasis serves as a barrier between the apse and the worshipers. It is adorned with large exquisitely painted icons in gold and silver frames which are arranged in a prescribed order. Over time these get covered with candle smoke and city grime and require cleaning and mending.

The iconostasis still remains in the same form as it was after Britchkin's renovation around 1900. During the Revoluton, the faithful removed as many icons and frescos as they could pry out and hid them.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, they started to reappear, especially for the Mihailovsky Monastery complex which was blown up. (Photo credit: askidias)

Occasionally, the highest levels of the church hierarchy came to Kiev on church business and Britchkin would entertain them in his home. Helen recalled her grandmother telling her how these dignitaries would come to dinners at their apartment and their ecclesiastical rank required that they eat only vegetarian food. Occasionally, she admitted to Helen, she added a bit of chicken broth to flavor her borsch, for she thought vegetarian food was bland. She felt God would not hold it against her.

At this point in his life, he stood at the pinnacle of power that his wealth permitted. He was speaker of the Duma and patron financial patron of the great historic Cathedral where the Slavs had been converted to Christianity.

St. Sophia

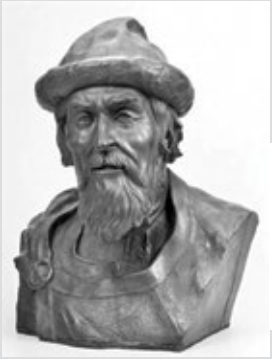
Established in the 11th century by Yaroslav the Wise, (Yaroslav Vladimirovich) St. Sophia represents the spiritual heart of the Orthodox Church in the lands of the Slavs. It was this same Viking prince of Kiev who constructed the wall upon which Britchkin's built his house.

In 988 AD, Yaroslav's father, St. Vladimir, also known as the Red Sun, converted the Kievan Rus to Christianity.

Modelled on St. Sophia of Constantinople, the church served as the burial place of princes and the sarcophagus of Yaroslav still rests within the building, although his remains disappeared after 1936 when they were removed for study.

Sarcophagus of Yaroslav the Wise. His remains disappeared after removal for study in 1936. Two skeletons were found in this sarcophagus, one being a woman. (Photo Credit: Wikimedia)

When the sarcophagus was opened it turned out there were two skeletons within, a man and a woman. The woman's remains were later returned but the other



A sculpture of Yaroslav the Wise made using forensic facial reconstruction in 1939 by M. Herasymiv. (Photo credit: Encyclopedia of Ukraine.)

skeleton may have been removed for safe keeping a second time at the start of the German occupation and then lost or stolen.

A badly weathered fresco depicting Yaroslav and his family can still be seen today.

In the mosaic, the lettering shows the name Yaroslav Vladimirovich. He is holding the church itself against his chest. Among Slavs, there was no separation of the Prince and the church. (Photo Credit: Wikipedia)

The Britchkins in the Class System of Old Russia — Guild #2

By omission we know that Britchkin did not seek success in society, and his wife, Lyena (Baba Lyena) seems to have associated mostly with her own family. No mention was ever made of friends or other families with whom the Britchkins may have been close. However, their friends may all have been executed or historically "buried."

Merchants were assigned to ranked "guilds" by the amount of land, property and earnings they controlled. Guild membership accorded certain rights and privileges, the highest being Guild #1 made up of the wealthiest commoners in the empire

who owned large successful industries such as railroads, sugar, and ironworks. Some owned land and even hundreds of serfs before emancipation.

Both Britchkin and Baba Lyena's family belonged to the next lower rung on the social ladder, merchant Guild #2. This would have been equivalent to upper middle class in the US today — wealthy but not super rich. It is evident that Britchkin aspired to rise even higher in the socio-economic system, for all his efforts seemed to go in that direction. However, he would not have succeeded even if the revolution had not happened for both his wealth and social network fell short of the key to entry into nobility.

Fabulously wealthy and well connected merchants were elevated to hereditary nobility by royal decree. One such example was the Tereschenko family of Ukraine who owned sugar factories. They amassed enormous wealth during the early 19th century and on May 12, 1870 Artemy Tereschenko was elevated to hereditary nobility by the Tsar. The Tereschenko's established a multi-generational dynasty and donated a number of buildings and art collections to charity. In Kiev, they built a small but ornate mansion, which today houses the Medical Library where our grandfather's and uncle's publications can be found. This building was never converted to *kommunalkas*.

In spite of his remarkable rise in wealth and prestige over his lifetime, Britchkin never established a business dynasty. When he died he had three living sons and one daughter and none had been groomed to enter the business world. The boys were educated, but in technical and legal professions, not as merchants or bankers.

Britchkin's Loyalty to Tsar and Mother Russia

How did Britchkin manage to achieve so much in such a short time? Part of the answer may lie in the way Britchkin took advantage of his Russian nationalism which offered him various economic and social benefits not available to those not identified as "great" Russians. In return he expressed his gratitude in his unwavering support for the tsar, church and empire.

During those years the Tsars granted various economic incentives for loyal Russian businessmen to set up in various parts of the empire where there was social unrest. For example, only Russian merchants were allowed to trade with Western Europe. This was offered a particular advantage for Britchkin whose business relied heavily on glass from Czechoslovakia and banking ties with France. Kiev offered him the best opportunity to benefit from these incentives. It was closer to Czechoslovakia and competition from non-Russians was artificially suppressed. (http://ukrainianvancouver.com/internet-encyclopedia-ukraine-features-history-russians-ukraine/).

As a result, Britchkin remained strongly Tsarist and pro-Russian. Indeed, after the 1905 Revolution, when pro-Russian nationalist groups emerged on all sides, he joined the newly-formed Nationalist Club which supported Russian dominance over Ukraine and opposed Ukrainian independence movements.

As the unrest in Ukraine continued, various anti Russian or anti empire opposition groups formed, demanding independence, rights for ethnic minorities and parliamentary government. In response, the Russian nationalists tightened their economic controls and supported repression of all such demands. Britchkin himself took part in this effort for as director of the State Bank he used business loans to support ethnic Russians over Ukrainians, Jews, and others.

He instilled in his sons an unwavering loyalty for the Tsar and "Great Russia." Both sons later ended up in the White Army and, ultimately, in exile. Ethnic superiority inevitably requires one to ignore basic contradictions. The Tsar was not Russian. His family was not Russian. They preferred to speak English and German and it was customary for the women to convert to Eastern Orthodoxy which they did willingly over the centuries while martyrs in various parts of the empire died for their faith. Perhaps that was one of the great tragedies of Russia, that in the face of wealth, religious took second place.

As an irony of history, over 140 years later all of Britchkin's descendants ended up as supporters of democracy and cultural diversity in the United States.

Kiev Club of Russian Nationalists

Brtichkin was a either a member of the Russian Nationalist Club or closely associated with members (notes by Kovalinsky). It was disbanded after the Revolution and the members gunned down by Bolshevik forces at a meeting in 1919.

Established in 1908 the club's purpose was to defend Russian interests in the Western borderlands of the empire. Even though it numbered only 700 members at most, it became a powerful pressure group in the Empire owing to the energy and wealth of its members.

The club opposed the Ukrainian nationalist movement and the legalization of the Ukrainian language on the grounds that it was promoted by hostile Western interests. Also, they worked to suppress Ukrainian cultural and literary movements.

They vigorously defended Tsarist autocracy, Empire, and Orthodoxy, and condoned violent attacks on adversaries. The Club received financial support from Tsar Nicholas II, the Russian government and the police.

In 1919 gunmen burst in on a club meeting and killed everyone present. Others associated with the club were later persecuted and arrested. Britchkin died of stroke about six months before this assault.

Above from: http://ukrainianvancouver.com/internet-encyclopedia-ukraine-features-history-russians-ukraine/

Tsar Nicholas II receives deputies of Kyiv right-wing Russian organizations (including the Kyiv Club of Russian Nationalists).

This photo was probably taken in 1911 when the tsar and his family came to Kiev and visited the Pechersk monastery.

The House at 10/12 Malopodvalnaya Street

By 1898, at the peak of his career Britchkin commissioned the construction of a large apartment building in the Austrian style at #10/12 Malopodvalnaya Street. In the middle on the second floor a beautiful 10 room custom apartment was specially designed for his family and this is where they lived for almost the next 20 years until the whole building was seized and nationalized during the Revolution.

The Google map shows the location of Britchkin's house on 10/12 on Malopodvalnaya Street.

The house was located in a fashionable sector of Kiev, on the slope that links the Duma Plaza and the commercial main street, the Kreschatik, with the upper ancient part of the city. The house sits on the remains of the small ancient defensive wall looping out from the main rampart that once surrounded the city — hence the name "malo" = small and "podvalnaya" = under the wall (or the lower wall or "*val*").

Around 1898, the recently married Britchkin built this large apartment building on 10/12 Malopodvalnaya Street, half way between today's Independence Square and the historic upper city.

Before the Revolution the family occupied the ten room master suite on the second floor accessed through the door on the far left in this photo, which Helen called "The Blue Door."

Britchkin died in 1918. The whole building was nationalized and cut up into ***kommunalkas***. The family was evicted but later given the first floor corner room in the middle of the picture accessed through the large oak door directly to the left.

The door to the right of the corner led to a stairway up to Helen's Aunt Nadia's room which came to Helen and her grandmother, after her Aunt's death.

The porte cochere visible to the far right of the picture opened to Helen's grandmother's former fruit garden.

The front entrance that led up to the main family apartment before the Revolution opened out onto the now-named Patrozhenskaya Street (formerly Mihailovski Lane).

The port cochere passed into the courtyard at the marker for the contemporary "Karavan Turoperator."

It is unclear if the grey building marked #12 today was part of the original building. The large rectangular grey structure across the street on the left side is the 1950's KGB.

Map of Kiev showing Malopodvalanaya about 20 years before Britchkin built his house. (Source unknown).

The walls of Kiev

Kiev was divided into three parts: the upper city where the churches stood and the princes built their palaces; the lower city, (Podol) where the crafts people and the merchants lived near the river landing; and the religious enclave, (Pechersk) housing a huge religious complex.

Early drawing of Kiev probably as a fortified trading center on the river. Over time, walls were added on until today archaeologists are finding the remains of these, called "vals" extending far to the south of the city.

Britchkin's house was built over one of the smaller vals which looped around and connected to a major val that surrounded the religious center of the city. (Photo source unknown)

This city arrangement was inherited from the old Scandinavians, or "Viking Rus" as they were called. Within historic times, Kiev's upper city remained the cultural, political and commercial center even after the walls were long gone. All that remains of the original ramparts is the Golden Gate, close to Helen's home.

Drawing from the open air museum Kiev Park, showing walls (vals), built to defend the upper city, during the time of Yaroslav the Wise. (Photo credit: Kievpark).

Archaeologists have discovered walls, called "vals" after the Scandianian word, all around Kiev and far to the south as well. Britchkin's house was built on one of the smaller "vals" that protected the hillside to the upper city, thus the street name "Malopodvalnaya," or "small lower val."

This building is the one prominent material vestige that remains of Britchkin's legacy (besides his descendants). In the 1990s it was taken over by the City of Kiev, remodeled, and converted into condos and upscale apartments, each of which sold for millions of US dollars.

Britchkin's House on the Eve of the Revolution

In 1917, just before the Revolution, the city conducted a survey which included a complete inventory of buildings, their occupants, room counts, rents paid, number of servants, family members ages, and other data. Fortunately, Kovalinsky discovered it in the archives bringing to light information that had been suppressed for over a hundred years. (A copy of the survey can be found in the Annex).

According to the inventory, the building at 10/12 Malopodvalnaya Street had 17 apartments, each built in a slightly different configuration ranging in size from

10 rooms in the largest (the family suite) to the one room without a kitchen for the caretaker. Apartments 2 and 4 together were rented by the Sugar Factory and occupied by 16 inhabitants. Both faced the front of the building onto Mihailovsky Lane and paid 7500 rubles/year which amounted to the highest rent of all the apartments.

The family's original spacious second floor apartment stretched along the length of Mihailovsky Lane (today named "Patorzhenskoho Street"). It had 10 rooms plus a hallway, kitchen, and one room for servants. The survey reports that ten people and two renters lived in this apartment. It is unclear if the renters are included within the ten or not. Anna was married by 1917 so the resident family members were probably seven: Britchkin and his wife, Baba Lyena, sons Nicolai, Ivan and Sergey, and Vasily Ivanovich and Anna. There were also at least two servants. It is unclear who the renters may have been.

The main entrance to the building stands in the center on Mihailovsky Lane, through what Helen called "The Blue Door". The stairs up were tastefully decorated with imported blue and white tiles bearing a meander design. They were relatively narrow for such a large house and not designed to impress the visitor with sweeping spaces as in upper class houses. The second floor apartments had high ceilings decorated with plaster moldings and rosettes from which lights were suspended. There was no wiring in the ceiling.

Britchkin had commissioned the best architects and used only the finest materials (based on descriptions told to Helen). And indeed, each brick bears a craftsman's stamp on it; each tile was authenticated.

The house had electricity, sewage and running water in all apartments, but only Apartments 13 and 16 had bathtubs. Electricity was paid for by the tenants. The survey says there was "no heater" in any of the apartments but this probably refers to Dutch stoves. Helen remembers having central heat generated from a large boiler in the basement. It was probably coal burning and dated back to the original construction.

All the apartments rented unfurnished. Leases were oral arrangements except for two cases and no explanation of the deviation from the pattern is given. Rent varied from 7,500 rubles/year for the largest 16 room unit rented by the sugar company, to 120 rubles/year for the one room unit in the basement and without a kitchen.

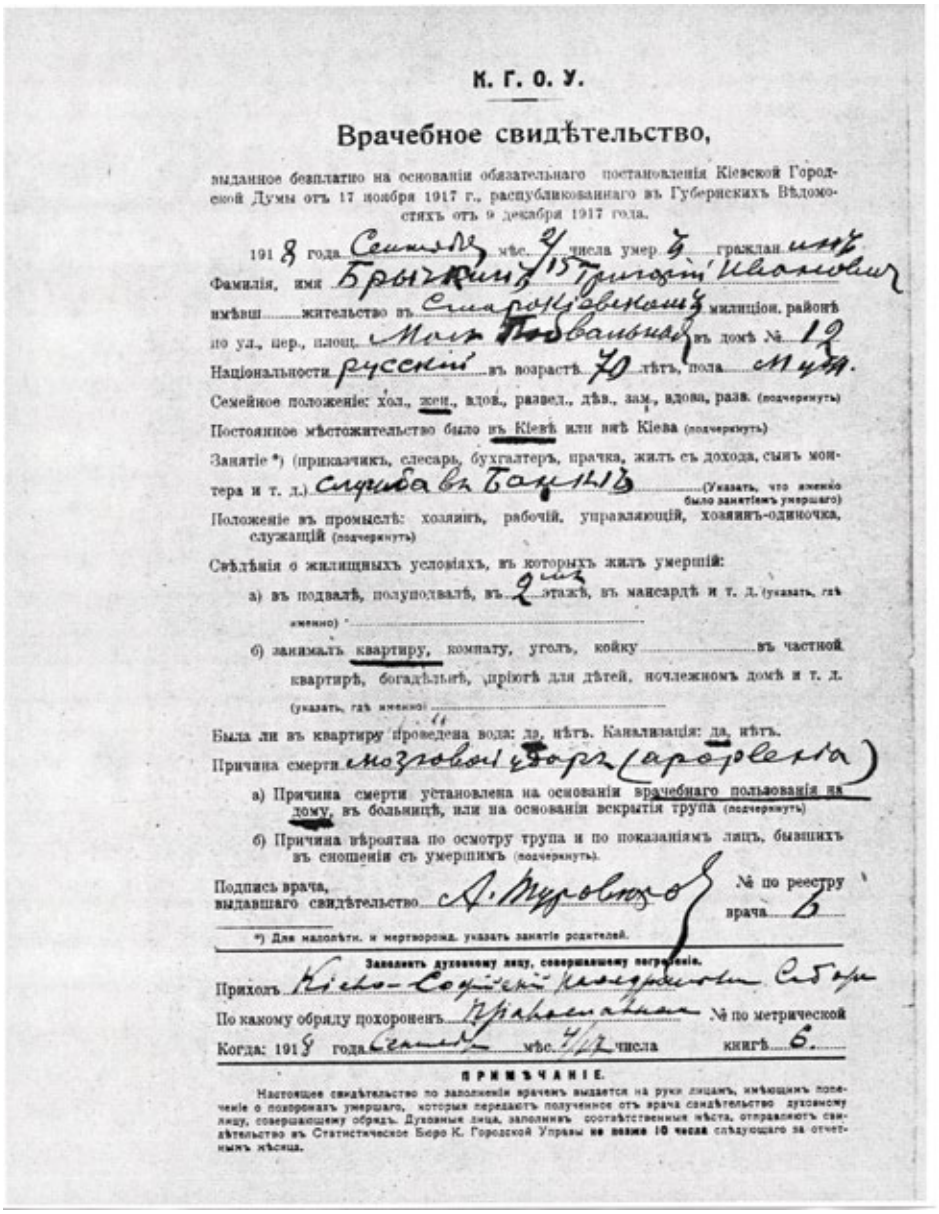
Helen was told that Britchkin created units of different types for different classes, including some less expensive smaller apartments for teachers and workers. She said he was very conscious of providing accommodations for working people of modest means.

Helen was born in the family suite Apartment #2 on February 17, 1918 (*NS*), when the family still owned the building. She remembered that before the Revolution Britchkin's sister Elizaveta lived in the basement with her daughter Dunyasha (Evdokia) where she ran a bakery and laundry for the tenants. He supported his sister all his life but she always remained in the background,

probably because she was totally illiterate and did not have her brother's confidence in society. Helen remembered her from her childhood as a shadowy figure rarely mentioned by family Members. Her fate, and that of her daughter, Dunyasha remains unknown.

Everything is Lost

On September 15, 1918, Britchkin died of stroke as the Revolution was taking its bloody progress in Ukraine. Helen always said, "grandfather had the good sense to die of stroke in 1918." He did not live to see his house, his property and everything he had worked so hard to acquire, seized by the Soviets and his family turned out into the street.



К. Г. О. У.

Врачебное свидѣтельство,

выданное безплатно на основаніи обязательнаго постановленія Кіевской Городской Думы отъ 17 ноября 1917 г., распубликованнаго въ Губернскихъ Вѣдомостяхъ отъ 9 декабря 1917 года.

191 8 года Сентября мѣс. 4 числа умеръ Б гражданинъ

Фамилія, имя Брыжкинъ Григорій Ивановичъ

имѣвш. жительство въ Самарскомъ милиціон. районѣ

по ул., пер., площ. Мало Подвальная въ домѣ № 12

Національности русскій въ возрастѣ 79 лѣтъ, пола муж.

Семейное положеніе: хол., жен., вдов., развед., дѣв., зам., вдова, разв. (подчеркнуть)

Постоянное мѣстожительство было въ Кіевѣ или внѣ Кіева (подчеркнуть)

Занятіе *) (приказчикъ, слесарь, бухгалтеръ, прачка, жилъ съ дохода, сынъ мастера и т. д.) служба въ Банкѣ (Указать, что именно было занятіемъ умершаго)

Положеніе въ промыслѣ: хозяинъ, рабочій, управляющій, хозяинъ-одиночка, служащій (подчеркнуть)

Свѣдѣнія о жилищныхъ условіяхъ, въ которыхъ жилъ умершій:

а) въ подвалѣ, полуподвалѣ, въ 2 этажѣ, въ мансардѣ и т. д. (указать, гдѣ именно)

б) занималъ квартиру, комнату, уголъ, койку въ частной квартирѣ, богадѣльнѣ, пріютѣ для дѣтей, ночлежномъ домѣ и т. д. (указать, гдѣ именно)

Была ли въ квартиру проведена вода: да, нѣтъ. Канализація: да, нѣтъ.

Причина смерти мозговой удар (паралич)

а) Причина смерти установлена на основаніи врачебнаго пользованія на дому, въ больницѣ, или на основаніи вскрытія трупа (подчеркнуть)

б) Причина вѣроятна по осмотру трупа и по показаніямъ лицъ, бывшихъ въ сношеніи съ умершимъ (подчеркнуть).

Подпись врача, выдавшаго свидѣтельство А. Муровцевъ № по реестру врача 5

*) Для малолѣтн. и мертворожд. указать занятіе родителей.

Заполнить духовному лицу, совершавшему погребеніе.

Приходъ Кіево-Софійскій кафедральный Соборъ

По какому обряду похороненъ Православный № по метрической книгѣ 6.

Когда: 191 9 года Сентября мѣс. 4/17 числа

ПРИМѢЧАНІЕ.

Настоящее свидѣтельство по заполненіи врачемъ выдается на руки лицамъ, имѣющимъ попеченіе о похоронахъ умершаго, которыя передаютъ полученное отъ врача свидѣтельство духовному лицу, совершающему обрядъ. Духовныя лица, заполнивъ соотвѣтственныя мѣста, отправляютъ свидѣтельство въ Статистическое Бюро К. Городской Управы не позже 10 числа слѣдующаго за отчетнымъ мѣсяца.

Britchkin's Death certificate dated September 4, 1918. He and the rest of the family were still residing at the time in their second floor suite on the second floor of the house at 10/12 Malopodvalnaya Street.

In 1919, the members of the Nationalist Club were gunned down at their club during a meeting by revolutionary gunmen. Kovalinsky discovered evidence in the Kiev Archive, that Britchkin had been a member of that club and that his name was on a hit list. Had he survived but another year, he would have been executed along with his fellow compatriots.

As the Revolution progressed, all pro tsarist tendencies were violently suppressed and surviving supporters were jailed or killed. Britchkin, the successful businessman and staunch supported of tsar and church, posthumously went from hero to villain. Everything that he believed in and tried to develop, once rewarded and applauded, now condemned him. His past success in itself became evidence of criminality.

So powerful was his memory to the emerging communist state that it was in itself considered a threat and all records mentioning him had to be expunged. All records of his building of the house on Malopodvalnaya Street or serving on the Board of the State Bank, remain elusive. Even his name was expunged from books and documents. He was to be forgotten and retroactively willed out of existence. His family bore the brunt of guilt by association. Even to mention his name became dangerous

After his death, angry mobs ransacked the house, hauling away everything that they could carry. The family servants seized jewelry, money, and personal items and one, Nastassia, informed on her former mistress. The Bolsheviks seized the house turning the family out into the street. They were now homeless. The house was eventually cut up into *Kommunalkas* — rooms with shared kitchens and bathrooms given to "revolutionary" workers and peasants, many of whom had never seen a flush toilet or running water in their lives.

The sleeping giant had turned. Britchkin the self made man, the serf who rose from bondage to wealth, ended up on the wrong side of history. Fate had him the final humiliation and heartbreak but his family were left destitute, homeless and persecuted.

At this point the ne'er do well son in law, Vasily Ivanovich stepped forward, put on his peasant unwashed sheepskin *Kozhuk* and odoriferous tar covered boots and went to stammer stupidly to the authorities begging them for living quarters. The tables had turned and he was assigned a corner room in Britchkin's house where he, Anna, Baba Lyena, and the baby Helen were installed and where they remained until their departure from Kiev in 1943.

Helen, the child born in the grand second floor family apartment spent the next 24 years of her life in her in a crowded corner room in her grandfather's house forbidden to ever utter his name.

Any hint of a connection to Britchkin remained dangerous so the family lived a life of forgetting. The main entrance to the house they called "blue door," was strictly off limits. Helen never approached it but often glanced at it from a distance, wondering what life inside might have been like for her beloved grandmother before the revolution.

She often mentioned that she had grown up constantly warned never to utter her grandfather's name or her mother's maiden name. Imagine a world where you have to avoid names, words, small memories on pain of death! Occasionally, she overheard snippets about the past but everyone had been strictly schooled to forget him so that even in the US, Anna rarely talked about her father. His era had ended.

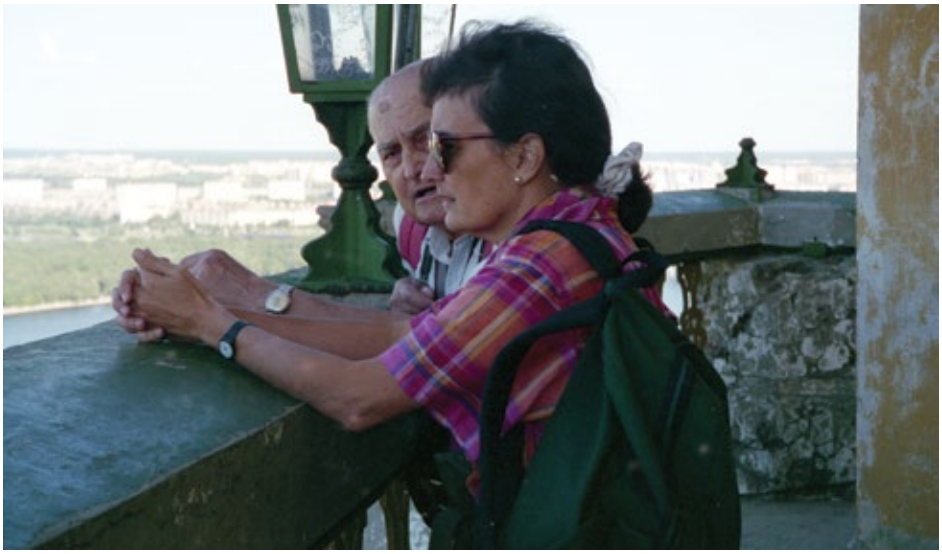
Google view of Malopodvalnaya street following the contour of the old wall. The KGB buildings stand on the square block on the left side of the photo.

Built around 1951, the newer buildings faced the Britchkin house across Patrozhenskaya Street replacing old buildings which may have housed rental rooms or the small apartment where Vasily Ivanovich reportedly lived and from where he flirted with the young Anna Britchkina until she fell in love with him.

To make matters worse, the newly built building of the Land Administration Government (Zemskaya Uprava), just one block away on Volodymyrska Street # 33 became the headquarters of the KGB Administration in Kiev. In 1951, an ugly stone faced torture buildings were added to it on the back side on Mihailovsky street, facing the old Britchkin apartment.

Return to Kiev 1995

In 1995 Helen and Peter returned to Kiev for the last time in their lives, with the authors and one grandson. Helen's house on Malopodvalnaya Street was there and now belonged to the city. It had been gutted in preparation for remodel and conversion into upscale condos. Olga, with her son, Cedric, who came to Kiev early to prepare for the visit, approached the workers and asked for permission to take her parents through the house. The workers were fascinated with the family story and agreed to take us on a tour through the building which turned out to be as entertaining for them as it was exciting for the family. For the first time in her life, Helen saw the apartment where she was born and where her grandfather had lived.



Kathy and Peter looking out over the city from the bell tower in the Pechersk.

In 1995 Kathy, Olga and Olga's son, Cedric, accompanied Helen and Peter on their return to Kiev. The homes of both Peter and Helen were still standing as were the school and universities they attended along with many landmarks that survived the bombing in WWII.

Over the 50 years of Soviet control the house had fallen into pitiful disrepair. Water had leaked through the ceilings and damaged the original paint which still remained in some of the hallways. Walls were gouged and crumbled in places; the ornate iron bannisters bent and broken; doors removed, letting in cold winter air; window panes smashed and boarded with roughly hacked scraps of wood. The house had fallen victim to the fate of commons.

Still, the was the first time, Helen had entered the apartment of her grandparents, and for her just to have free access to the house was a moving experience. We could only look into the main room from the door of the Britchkin apartment for the floors had rotted and were unsafe. The room we saw was probably the parlor. It was not over large but the outer wall was lined with floor to ceiling windows facing Mihailovsky Lane but instead of trees and houses, the view presented the ominous dark stone face of the KGB building. A molded rosette, now water

Helen had grown up in a corner room of her grandfather's house and it was now appropriated by the City of Kiev and gutted in preparation for conversion to upscale condos. The workers were willing to show the family around and this was the first time Helen had entered her grandparents' apartment and other parts of the house which had been off limits to her in her youth.

Olga's son, Cedric Puleston, in the apartment in Kiev during our visit.

damaged and discolored, still decorated the center of the ceiling. It lacked wiring for an electric light but a small hook protruded from its center indicating a lamp had probably been suspected.

The rest of the apartment was too damaged to enter but accompanied by several curious workers, we wandered through all the hallways and rooms that were accessible. The original house was built in three floors of thick limestone walls. We were told that Ukrainian builders had preferred limestone but because it was so soft a material, the walls had to be very thick to sustain the weight of the house.

Olga explained to the workers who we were and they were happy to take the us around. When their supervisor showed up, they quickly shuffled us out a different entrance.

The original house had three floors but in Soviet times, a fourth had been added but in such shoddy fashion that most of the walls had crumbled and the floors were open to the sky. Metal placards identifying the residents still hung on the walls and the workers took them off for us as keepsakes.

In the entrance, Peter grabbed a crowbar and started to pry off floor tiles to take home, and after some discussion, the amused and puzzled workers helped him extract a couple of good samples. Most were broken and all were scheduled for replacement.

As we were wandering around, a commotion began on the street outside, and the workers hustled us out a side door. Their supervisor had shown up and they had broken the rules by letting us wander inside a construction site. After spending some time outside and exploring the courtyard, and after the supervisor had disappeared, we gathered the workers and handed them all the US cash we had on us — $36.00 — thanking them for the tour and telling them that this was for them to have a drink to Grandfather Britchkin's memory. It was not acceptable to tip for favors in Ukraine at that time. The overjoyed workers all shouted "to Grandfather Britchkin!" and we went on our way lugging tiles, bricks, and metal placards in our bags.

The workers have aged and possibly tell the story of the family that came from America just to see an old and crumbled house. Our parents are gone but the house remains and Britchkin has been found again.

This was the first time that Helen got to see the main entrance behind the “blue door” which led up to her grandparents’ apartment. It was here she was born.

The building had been badly trashed over the years of Soviet rule. Water had leaked through the ceilings, the railings had been fallen off and many of the windows were missing glass. On top of that, work had started to remove the moldings and strip the décor in preparaton for replacement thus, its original beauty was not visible.

However, considering that after the remodel the condos sold for at least 1 million US dollars each, the house obviously had been well built, solid and elegantly laid out.

Some of the original painting on the interior walls had survived.

Ornamentation over the stairwell in 1995 during remodel but showing original water damage. This was the original décor commissioned by Britchkin and left to deteriorate over the years.

A door on a landing once opened out onto a verandah which had long ago collapsed. Often servants slept on pallets under stairs such as these.

Victorian ceiling medallion in the Britchkin second floor family apartment in 1995 during remodel. This was the first time Helen had been in the apartment where she was born.

The entry and stairs behind the blue door were tiled with blue and white imported tiles decorated in a meander design. They had been damaged over time so the workers helped us take some pieces home as samples.

Kathy, Olga and Helen with a workman looking around Britchkins original apartment.

The upper part on the Malopodvalnaya Street side just above the porte cochere. The house looked as if it were built in several stages or several styles that had been attached. Parts of it were more sculputed on the outside than others.

View of the outside of the house on Malopodvalnaya Street. The glass had been removed for replacement.

Further downhill the house outer surface was more plain and looked at is it had been built at a separate construction phase.

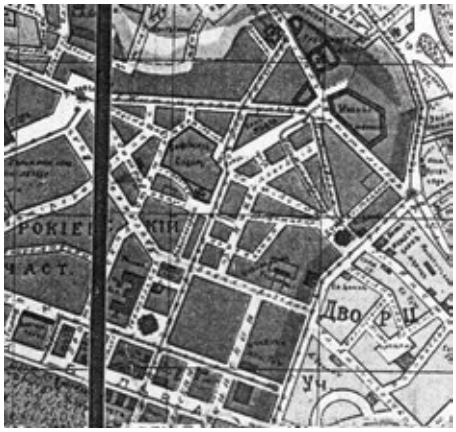
At the corner of Malopodvalnaya and Patrozhenskaya Streets a door opened into the Sochansky room where Helen grew up. This side door on Malopodvalnaya opened to a small stair that went up to a tiny room where Helen's grandmother's sister, Aunt Nadya lived until she died.

After her death, Helen and her grandmother slept there.

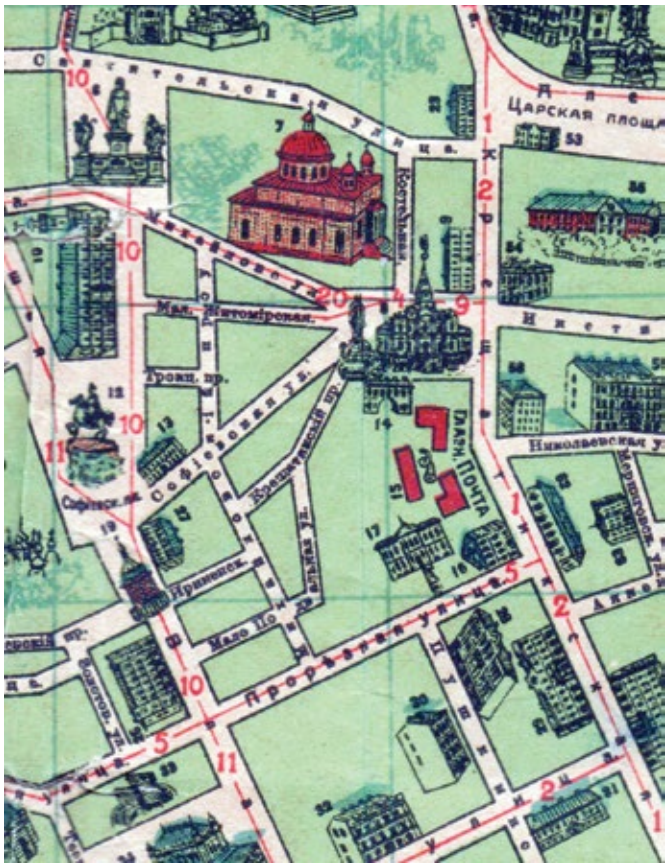
The house wraps around a courtyard that was once Baba Lyena's garden. We entered through the port cochere on Malopodvalnaya Street. Years of trashing and the construction had left it destroyed but Helen recognized the windows and remembered where there still were trees.

On the left of the courtyard, Helen pointed out to the scarred remains of a small balcony and said that had been her grandmother's from where she would gaze out at her garden. It is not likely for that balcony did not connect to the original family apartment.

The balcony she remembered was probably long gone and the door boarded up. This is another view of the courtyard with the original house wrapping around three sides of it. It is possible that parts visible here were added on after WWII.



A map of Malopodvalnaya Street in 1902 just when the house was first built and occupied.



A 1911 map of the area with Malopodvalnaya street in the middle and north being on the lowwer left.

This is a current view at the time of the writing taken from Google maps in 2019 from the corner of Malopodvalanaya and Porezhenskaya Streets looking at the corner which was the Sochansky family room.

This corner had a large wooden double door which led directly into the Sochansky room.

Helen on the steps of her home on 10/12 Malopodvalnaya street in front of the door that opened into the family room. That door used to be on the corner of the house but was closed up years ago.

This photo was taken by Yura Duhovichny when he came by to say farewell as he was heading for military service as the Nazis were advancing on Kiev. She never saw him again. It is his dog sitting next to Helen.

Lost and Found: The Search for Britchkin

Until 1998, Helen had never even seen a picture of her grandfather although his memory or, perhaps, the absence of memory, haunted her. Of his life she knew only a few bits and pieces without details. In the US, she often mentioned him and expressed her a desire, perhaps even a need, to find him — to see a photograph of his face.

At that time, this house was the only physical evidence we had of Britchkin's existence and the only connection between the man and the house was Helen's memory. No record remained.

The campaign of extermination had proved successful. Books where he was mentioned had been discarded. Records of his business dealings, commissions for building the house, electricity bills, and tax reports had all been expunged. Photos destroyed. For almost a century Gregory Ivanovich Britchkin, serf, merchant, banker and free man had ceased to exist.

Then, three years after our visit to Kiev, Olga returned and hired the historian Vitaly Kovalinsky to find anything that might prove Helen's grandfather indeed existed. For years Kovalinsky also could find nothing in the archives, so deeply buried had Britchkin been. He began to doubt that Britchkin existed anywhere except in the family lore. Then he made a breakthrough. He found a Who's Who entry in an old business publication which had a portrait of Britchkin and a short business biography listing a few of his banking and political connections. It reported that he rose in life "by means of his own energy and hard work."

From that publication came the first photograph of Gregory Ivanovich Britchkin we had ever seen and Helen was ecstatic. This led to other records until finally Kovalinsky was able to draw out a considerably history of this remarkable and ill-fated man even including his rediscovered role in the renovation of the St. Sophia Iconostasis and Altar which he then included in his own book "The Fate of Temples" in 1914.

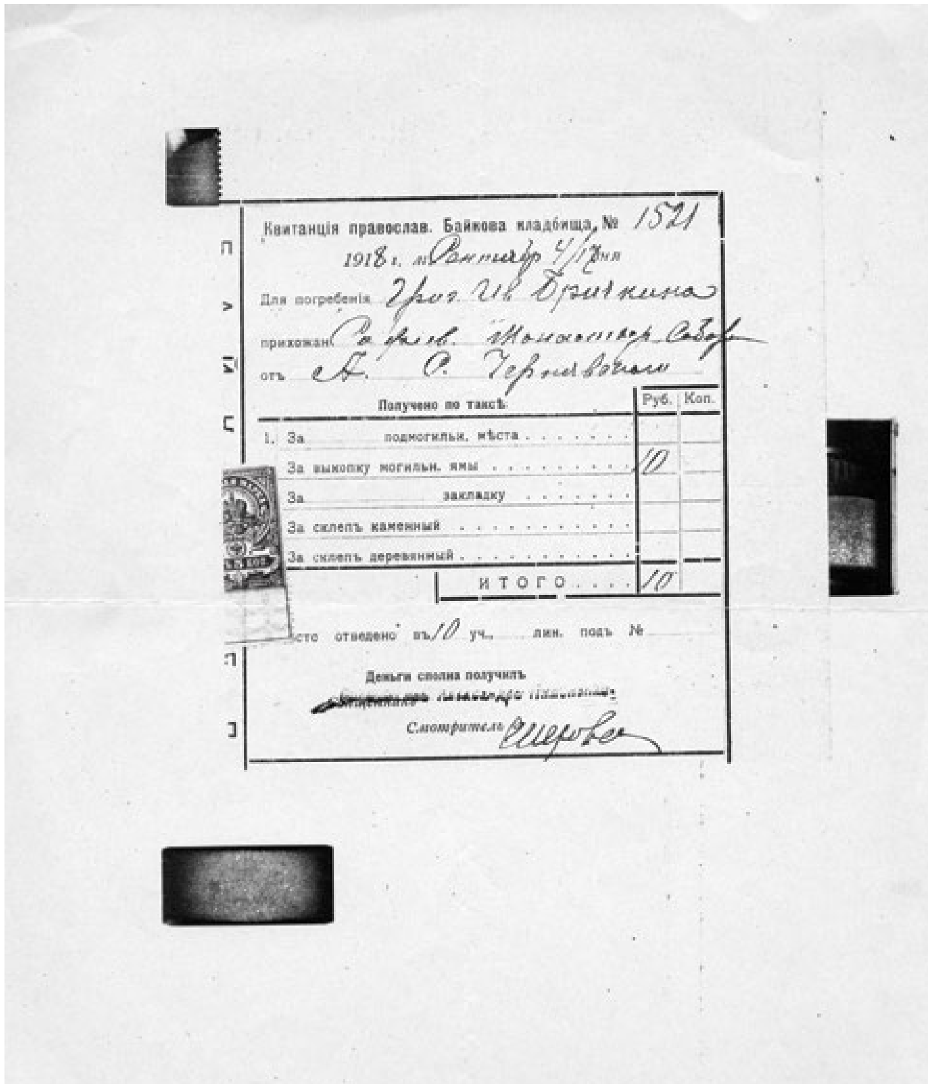
If you visit St. Sophia today, you will see the iconostasis and altar that Britchkin paid to renovate.

End of an Era

Toward the end of his life, Britchkin probably had a sense of where the Russian Empire was headed because he purchased the insurance policy for his women to be used if they ever had to leave the Russian Empire. Things had gone from bad to worse since the 1905 Revolution. The empire was teetering. Then, in 1918, the tsar and his whole family plus servants were executed. For Britchkin it must have been a great shock and devastating sadness for his life was tied to church and tsar. Once the emperor gone, the church itself was in peril. Two months later Britchkin died.

He had been well aware that the world was changing around him for long before the final end of the empire, Britchkin had send his sons to university, not to

become merchants like himself, but to train as an engineer and a lawyer. He prepared them to take a role in a new industrializing Russia as educated professionals. What did he foresee for his business interests after his death? What had he planned for the disposition of his assets? His share in the bank? We may never know. No will has ever surfaced.



Квитанція православ. Байкова кладбища, № 1521

1918 г. м. [illegible] 4/17 дня

Для погребенія [illegible]

прихожан [illegible]

отъ [illegible]

Получено по таксѣ	Руб.	Коп.
1. За подмогильн. мѣста		
За выкопку могильн. ямы	10	
За закладку		
За склепъ каменный		
За склепъ деревянный		
ИТОГО	10	

[Мѣ]сто отведено въ 10 уч. лин. подъ №

Деньги сполна получилъ

Смотритель [illegible]

The receipt for the burial plot in Baikove Cemetery where Britchkin was buried. According to what Helen was told, he had purchased a plot and built a crypt. She had visited this crypt and said it had doors that opened onto a small stair that descended down into a chamber where his small sons had been lain to rest years before.

We had the plot number but all the numbers had been changed and try as we might, found nothing that would have qualified as his tomb.

The Bolsheviks robbed Britchkin of everything he had including his hard earned status as a free and honored citizen. He was demoted to a social standing even lower than that of a serf. He was now an “Enemy of the People.”

He was laid to rest in a family crypt he had acquired in Baikove Cemetery and here, too, he was robbed of his right to a peaceful internment. Helen had been told that during his lifetime, he had purchased a family plot on which he had built a marble monument with doors that opened into a chamber below ground. His three young sons who had died in childhood preceded him there.

As all things in old Russia, even the cemeteries were stratified and Baikove was a prestigious place for people of means to spend eternity. Still today it remains the "cemetery of choice" for the elite of Kiev. During the Soviet era it was a sign of communist prestige to be buried in Baikove. As one walks along the main avenue, black marble portraits of forgotten men line the street. All had probably paid heavily during their lifetimes for the privilege of being buried here.

Creative socialist entrepreneurs developed a brisk business selling occupied grave plots in this desirable location, and untended graves were simply dug up, their marble monuments reshaped and reused. The godless elbowed their way into consecrated ground.

In 1995 and again in subsequent years, family members, including the authors, searched for his grave without success. According to the receipt for the burial which Helen still possessed, he was interred in Row 10. Searching all of row 10 proved futile. No crypt, no grave, and no marker with the Britchkin name was ever found. In 1942, fire destroyed all cemetery records. Thus, even in death, Britchkin was robbed of respect he fought so hard to achieve.

By bringing him back into the light again, we breathed new life into our own past and rescued Gregory Ivanovich Britchkin from obscurity.

Olga searched the area where the plot number indicated the tomb might have been but no evidence of anything this elaborate could be found.

CHAPTER 3

Lyena Ivanovna Mihailenko Britchkina (Baba Lyena)

(b. May 1, 1873, Kiev, Ukraine — d. November 24, 1947 Athens, Greece)

Lyena Mihaelenko Britchkina, known as Baba Lyena, probably photographed just before the Revolution of 1917. She was quiet and gentle, never asserting herself.

Well educated and multi-lingual she helped her husband with his correspondence as he had only studied to about grade eight and at home, taught by his mother.

She dressed in austere dark colors and her blouse is held together with a simple pin to avoid exposing her throat.

Helen's grandmother, Lyena Mihailenko was a quiet, submissive, soft spoken woman overshadowed in youth by a confident formidable mother who had been widowed young and developed a successful business of her own to support her four surviving young children. Lyena was raised to become a dutiful and obedient wife to a successful businessman whose house she would manage. She was definitely not groomed to follow in her independent mother's footsteps.

(Note: Her name is "Lena or Elena" or, Helen, in English. Our mother was named for her grandmother. To distinguish the different individuals with the same name, we will use the form "Lyena" or "Baba Lyena" for Helen's grandmother and "Helen" or "Elena" for our mother.)

Baba Lyena was born on May 1, 1873 to Maria and Ivan Mihailenko, the youngest of five children (four of whom survived). Her father came from the class of settled Cossacks, many of whom had Polish roots. Her mother came from a local merchant family whose roots in the Podol,the trade and craft district of Kiev, ran deep. At least four generations of her ancestors had lived and worked along the same street, contributing to the economic prosperity and cultural development that made this one of the most celebrated cities of Europe.

Baba Lyena grew up on the Podol amid many cousins, aunts, uncles, and distant relations, most of whom owned houses and businesses along or near to Vozdvizhenskaya Street not far from the muddy banks of the Dnieper River.

View of the Podol and the Dnieper landings from the south. This was the sector of the city of Kiev where leatherworkers, potters, tar preparers, and other crafts workers lived. Probably around 1830. (Photo Credit: Library of Congress wdl.org)

Same view as the previous photo but some years later after industry was established. The same church can be seen on the left side of the picture along the open plaza. (Source unknown)

Baba Lyena's father died of Tuberculosis when she was about six years of age and her mother, Maria, took matters into her own hands establishing a successful fruit jam business which provided handsomely for her four surviving children.

Maria made sure her children were well provided for and grew up in comfort without the need to work either in the home or the family business. Servants handled the household chores and an emancipated serf who had formerly belonged to Maria's friend served as nanny and then personal maid to Baba Lyena until marriage.

Baba Lyena's two older brothers went to university and the girls studied at a *pansion* (*Russian:* Пансион), a boarding school for upper class and wealthy merchant girls akin to a finishing school based on a French model. The girls learned languages, music, literature, home management and drawing room skills necessary to attract a good husband. In the Russian caste system, daughters of the nobility did not attend the same schools as those of the merchant classes so it is reasonable to assume she was being groomed for marriage to a wealthy and successful merchant or businessman.

An Arranged Marriage, a Dowry, an Old Groom

Just before she turned 19, Baba Lyena's mother began searching for a husband for her daughter and in 1892 or 1893, Lyena Ivanovna Mihailenko married Gregory Ivanovich Britchkin in an arranged marriage. We have no record of the wedding, but it took place either in the St. Sophia Cathedral where the groom, Gregory Britchkin served as a *starosta* or elder since 1891 or in the Kresto-Vozdvizhenskaya Church on the Podol which handled most, if not all, of the Mihailenko family religious affairs for several generations.

Custom dictated that the first overtures be made on behalf of the girl by her mother and, if positively received, negotiations were taken over by the men of the

family who haggled over the dowry and other settlements with the groom's male relatives. In this case, the groom had no family and he was a very austere and self disciplined man. Thus, either the negotiations remained short and to the point or he assigned a colleague to negotiate on his behalf. Such negotiations were generally accompanied by many toasts of overproof vodka which was not Britchkins style as he was not a drinking man.

Maria ruled her family with an iron hand and some years earlier had arranged a marriage for her elder daughter, Aunt Nadya, with a large dowry, also to an older wealthy man who lived in a house behind the family home. It turned out to be a disaster. Aunt Nadya loathed her husband from the beginning. He was rich but a drunk and there was some talk that he had contracted syphilis sometime before the marriage which may have accounted for their inability to conceive. This experience, however, did not deter Maria from repeating the arrangements when planning for her younger daughter. It was, from all accounts, a loveless marriage.

Marriage contract negotiations in a village, painting by Mykola Mymonenko, 1882. In the towns, people dressed in a more western style and lived in larger houses but the marriage contract negotiations were quite similar. (Photo: Wikimedia.org)

There was a rumor that before her marriage Baba Lyena had a "romance" with an art student friend of her brother's. The future artist went to study in Italy where he apparently went off with somebody else and broke her heart. Supposedly she never forgot or forgave him, but that "finished her modest love life." The word "romance" probably consisted of a chaste exchange of glances, letters, hopes and nothing more.

Gregory Ivanovich Britchkin was, at the time, a rising star on the Kiev political and economic scene. As a husband he had a few disadvantages. He was old (all of 43), uneducated, socially unpolished, and blunt. He lacked local roots and family. But he was rich, successful and available; a self made man who was going places. He was also known to be honest and straightforward in his business dealings. That he was Russian may have worked in his favor, for he represented the social faction that controlled Ukraine and enjoyed the international trade advantages that this offered.

Podol in 1941 on the eve of WWII. The caption identifies this where the potters section meets the leartherworkers area labelled as "Goncharo-Kojumaki." (Photo Credit: oldkiev.ho.ua)

It is likely that Maria also saw the potential son in law as a possible resource for her own business as well. Britchkin had ties to the sugar industry and Maria purchased considerable quantities of sugar for the jams she manufactured. Eight to ten years later, the sugar company would rent two large apartments for business

Marriage in Tsarist Russia

In Tsarist Russia, in the wealthy classes, women were a cost. In the lower class they were an asset. Among the wealthy, when a girl married her family lost assets because they had to give her a dowry. Since upper class women did not work, they did not contribute to the creation or maintenance of wealth but they still had to be provided for.

Thus, many noble and rich families forced their daughters to remain single by simple refusing to allocate a dowry and grant permission to wed. Among the royal nobility in Moscow, the unmarried daughters and sisters spent most of their lives in the Terem, or women's quarters in the Kremlin which was not restrictive as the Moslem "harem" but served to isolate them from possible liaisons.

Marriages to old men were often quite beneficial to the bride's family although they were frowned upon and eventually discouraged. A rich old man lucky enough to find an impoverished but pretty young bride was not likely to require much of a dowry.

Among peasants, women constituted an asset for the groom's family because they worked both in the home and in the fields. They were under the control of males but the males were dependent upon female labor.

A hard working peasant woman was highly sought after in marriage and her reputation gave her the right to choose or refuse marriage partners.

Peasants married between 16 and 22 with the women preferring husbands younger than themselves in hopes of avoiding early widowhood for men died at a younger age than women.

Painting by Vasily Pukirev depicting the arranged marriage of a young bride with an old groom. This was not common in Russia and was discouraged even before the Revolution. Nevertheless, Baba Lyena was married to man 24 years her senior in an arranged marriage.

Her daughter married a man, Vasily Ivanovich Sochansky, 18 years her senior but she fell in love with him and married him in spite of family objections. (source: Wikimedia.org)

offices in Britchkin's new building. Further, sometime after about 1900 the bank where Britchkin served as director granted Maria a loan to purchase or refinance her property at #9 Vozdvizhenskaya Lane. The property and her loan were transferred to new owners in the end of 1909.

Baba Lyena had no say in the marriage negotiations. One day her mother simply announced the arrangements had been made and she would be marrying Gregory

Ivanovich Britchkin. It was a *fait accompli* and there was nothing for it but to accept. In any case, not being a person to resist or disobey, Baba Lyena bowed to her mother's authority without protest.

In arranging her daughter's marriage, Maria clearly chose what she herself had lacked: economic security over love. She, herself, had married a man she loved who was only four years her senior and had been tragically widowed young. Her handsome and gay husband had been profligate and a poor earner so at his death she was left with four children and very little money.

Maria made certain that her daughter would be provided for no matter what happened to her husband. While widowhood was almost inevitable in Baba Lyena's future, poverty and the need to work for a living were not. Britchkin was 43 years old at the time of their marriage and Baba Lyena was only 19. For the next 25 years Baba Lyena's life went according to Maria's plan and then fate intervened and she lost husband. Even Maria could not have predicted that Baba Lyena and her children would also lose all their wealth and everything dear, including all but one of her children.

Helen often wondered out loud what Britchkin got out of the marriage where love was not involved. She speculated that he must have gained status and social acceptance by aligning himself with a merchant family with deep Kievan roots. As an outsider and a semi-literate former serf he had to work harder than most to prove himself. Even though he also belonged to the merchant class Guild #2, the marriage legitimized his social position as a "gentleman" merchant and was the next logical step in his climb up the social ladder.

As a known Russophile he must have accepted Maria and her family as Russian in spite of their mixed ethnic heritage that included not only Kievan ancestry but Polish, Russian and Ukrainian Cossack as well. Baba Lyena's maternal grandmother was a Nalivaiko—a family still celebrated in the Ukraine today. It probably also helped the family status that Lyena's late father had worked in the service of the Tsar as many settled Cossacks were wont to do.

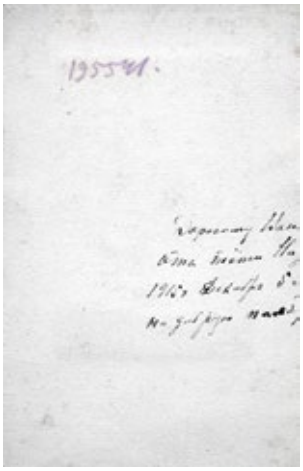
By all accounts Britchkin treated his wife well and even though he ruled his family in an autocratic fashion, he was not abusive or unkind. Baba Lyena was well provided for and bore at least seven children. She was compliant and never said a critical word about her husband, not even after his death.

Lyena came to the marriage with a dowry of 20,000 rubles, which was considered a "substantial" sum at the time. Helen said that Britchkin "matched" that amount, but if he did, it was not a necessary custom of the time. Since Medieval times, Slavic custom gave the woman full legal control and ownership of her dowry even though society was strongly patriarchal: a wife owed complete obedience to her husband. The dowry was a kind of insurance policy. If the woman were mistreated, theoretically, she could go back to her birth family with the dowry. This was an incentive for the husband to treat his wife well for no man wanted to lose his wife's dowry, which was usually invested together with his own property be it in a cow or in a building.

In reality, the bride's birth family did not want a daughter to come home. With the dowry they washed their hands of the daughter and passed her care and feeding on to her husband. Especially in wealthy families where wives did not contribute economically, the dowry served as a payment to the husband to take this woman off their hands. Among the wealthy, daughters did not work and, unlike western Europe, were not used as bargaining chips for political power, so the dowry diminished the family estate without gain. Daughters were a cost in old Russia and an extra mouth to feed. Tsars, for example, often left their daughters unmarried to keep their wealth intact.

Among the peasants and the poor, a woman was an extra mouth to feed even if she did work in the fields. Often the cost of keeping and feeding her was considered higher than the income she generated by her labor.

Lyena Ivanovna Mihailenko Britchkina, mother of Anna and grandmother of Helen at about age thirty. Photograph taken in 1915.



Back (still need to translate inscription)

In all likelihood, Baba Lyena handed over her dowry to her husband to manage but she contributed to Britchkin's business in a very practical ways. Being educated and literate in Russian, German and French, she translated and helped him with his business correspondence. However, he did not allow her to travel with him to Europe. It was said that since she was so much younger, Britchkin feared losing her to some flattering young admirer abroad.

Helen thought that the French and Germans probably treated her grandfather like a country bumpkin and that he would have benefited by taking his wife with him. She said, they probably *"…looked down on Dedushka (Britchkin) as uncivilized, but they kissed ass for his money. He came back, always, to Russia—his soil, God's country. He was pragmatic. He understood what lay underneath the flattery."*

This statement reflects Helen's own perception of Western Europe. She was sure the westerners laughed at Britchkin's rustic Russianness behind his back but that they hid it because he had money. She felt the west was much more materialistic than Ukraine or Russia and the culture was duplicitous. At the same time, she believed his came from a land infinitely superior to that of the west and he did not care what others thought of him.

Helen believed that Russians were historically "backward" compared to the west. She used to say that…

> "Western Europe had civilization when we were running around wearing animal skins."

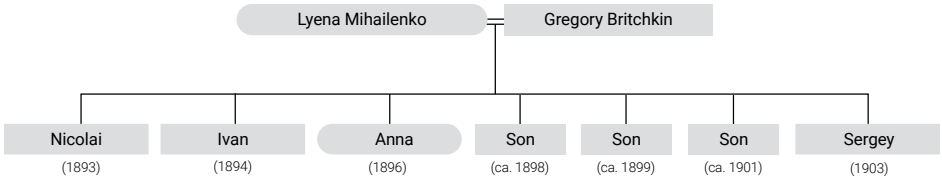
She also maintained that the Slavs suffered from an inferiority complex. These were common beliefs in Russia and Ukraine when she was growing up and formed the underpinning of the post-Revolutionary push to educate engineers and scientists to

> "bring the Soviet Union up to the level of the West."

Early Married Life

The new couple first settled into quarters on fashionable Pushkinskaya Street in the central historic district of Kiev, but around 1898 (or perhaps earlier) they moved to the custom-designed ten room apartment in a newly constructed modern apartment building Britchkin had commissioned on Malopodvalnaya Street. Here Baba Lyena ran a proper gentile household, and as the wife of a newly appointed *Starosta* of the St. Sophia Cathedral, she often hosted religious dignitaries from the Moscow Patriarchate when they came to Kiev on business. She carried out these duties with quiet competence and Britchkin no doubt knew that he had made a good choice of bride.

Baba Lyena gave birth 7 or 8 times between 1893 and 1903, but only four children survived to adulthood: three boys and one daughter, Anna (the authors' grandmother) born in 1896. The three sons who survived to adulthood were Nicolai, born January 31, 1893; Ivan, born July 24, 1894; and Sergey, born 1903 (date according to archival data; his grave in NY, made by his wife, says 1902).



Three of her sons died in infancy or childhood and their names did not come down to us. It is possible at least one was born after 1903 but who also did not survive. In one of the archive genealogies there appears a child named Mikhail after Sergey. The birth dates for the older boys vary in the records but only by one year. The first six births appear to follow in surprisingly close succession one after the other in both sets of records. It is possible that this rather tight pregnancy schedule contributed to the early death of the middle three children. We know for certain that Anna's birth date in 1896 was correct and that Sergey was born in 1902.

Helen was told that the young children were buried in a crypt in Baikove Cemetery which Britchkin had purchased for his family. He, himself, was the last member of the family laid to rest there but by 1995 no evidence of that crypt or monument could be found.

Britchkin hired a nanny for the children and the close spacing of the pregnancies indicates that the children had a wet nurse as was the custom in Russia at the time. The post of wet nurse was quite prestigious in the Russian Empire at the time. Wet nurses came from the peasantry, recruited in the villages and enjoyed a status higher than that of domestic servants. They wore a special uniform that announced their status. However, there was a cost. The wet nurse was usually a young girl whose child had died at childbirth. Often, however, young mothers, especially if unmarried, were pressured by impoverished families to take a post as wet nurse to supplement the family income, in which case, her baby usually failed to survive. Infant mortality in Russia before the revolution was astronomically high. One of the positive accomplishments of the revolution was the dramatically improvement in child and maternal health and the reduction of child mortality to levels below those of all other industrialized nations.

The Britchkin family highly valued education which was mostly private at the time. Sometime before 1917 Nicolai entered the Kiev Polytechnic Institute in Engineering but he failed to complete his studies which were interrupted by WWI followed by the Revolution. Eventually he did get his degree but in exile in Czechoslovakia having fled there with his brothers following the defeat of the While Army in 1922.

Ivan and Sergey, who were younger also finished their schooling in Czechoslovakia; Ivan, law school, and Sergey, who was a lot younger, Civil Engineering. None of the sons had been groomed to take over the Britchkin businesses and they apparently did not apprentice or work with their father. Perhaps Britchkin understood that the future of the nation lay in industrialization and steered them into professional occupations. Or, he may have considered educated professions to be a step above business in class and status.

Anna received the best education available to a girl from a Merchant Class Guild #2 family attending the prestigious girls Duchinskaya Gymnasia. (Her story can be found in Chapter 1 of this book.)

The World Falls Apart

Britchkin died suddenly in 1918 leaving his wife, three sons (one of whom was still just a 14 year old boy), her daughter Anna, her son-in-law Vasily Ivanovich, and their new baby Helen, none of whom had been trained to make decisions or take leadership responsibility . Lyena had never made decisions outside the household operations and she had never involved herself in financial matters. Britchkin had run his family as an autocrat, mirroring the structure of the empire with the Tsar on top wielding absolute authority. He had controlled everything. The women had never had to make decisions or cope with anything more challenging than giving orders to a servant. They were not even permitted to do housework. Neither Lyena or her daughter had any practical survival skills. Neither knew how to cook, sew clothing or even clean.

The older sons were of an age where they could have stepped in but a few months after Britchkin's death they had to join the White Army and flee eastward to save themselves from the bloodthirsty revolutionaries. Lyena was therefore left with only her hostile son in law to manage affairs and, by all accounts, he also had very few management skills, if any.

For a while, the family continued to occupy their apartment. As the chaos increased, the structure of society disintegrated. Electricity, water, fuel and public service ceased to function. People burned furniture and collected wood to cook and for heat. Famine followed and food became scarce. The land that could have fed all of Europe went lay uncultivated and famine persisted long into the Revolution and after as the fighting for that rich land continued in the city. He who controlled Kiev, controlled Ukraine.

Helen recounted …

> Everyone wanted Ukraine. It was God's paradise. We could feed all of Europe if given the chance. We had rich soil. Anything you planted in it would grow. So everyone wanted it. The city became violent and chaotic. People were shot in the street and no one really understood who was on which side.

The gently raised Baba Lyena described the tumult as roving bands of liberators.

> "The Ukrainian liberators could be identified by their dress for they wore *'tulups'*—fur-lined leather vests—and carried machine guns and ammunition slung over their shoulders and criss-crossed their chests in bandoliers as they rode through the streets of Kiev on trucks. Their guns in the air. Their eyes shining in excitement.

Resident stayed in their homes and held fast to their property. When asked why people stayed and tolerated this situation, Helen replied…

> No one thought this would go on as long as it did. We thought things would return to normal and everyone had to stay in their houses. If you left, your house would be taken over by other people, mobs; you would be robbed; you protected your property. We did not think the Bolsheviks would come to power permanently. No one wanted to leave their homes because if they abandoned the building, they would surely lose it for good. Everyone was convinced one day things would return to normal. It would pass…
>
> And so we lived with all that furniture until we left Kiev in 1943. Even after the house was taken away, and we were shoved into the tiny little corner room, my parents held on to the furniture, the sheets, and silverware; all stuffed into the room. There was even a large potted palm from my grandfather's apartment stuck against the wall!

She trailed off into a melancholy silence…

> " it did not pass. It only got worse."

It soon became evident that the sons of Britchkin were no longer safe in Kiev. They survived through the turbulent early period of factional fighting hoping, along with everyone else, that order and sanity would return. But in the end they were forced to flee the city, leaving their mother and sister behind. Baba Lyena would never see her two older sons again. The two women were left to cope on their own and things got even worse.

Helen recounted forlornly…

> Then one day the communists came to the house and said everything belonged to them, The family was turned out of their apartment. The whole house was taken by the mob who said they were now the government, and the family was put out onto the street.

As the Soviets consolidated power they formed a brutal secret police force to crush any possible opposition. To this end, they created a network of paid informants drawn from the ranks of disgruntled servants and the hopeful poor paying them to report on any incipient anti-Soviet activity, expression, or even thought. The informants were rewarded with gifts from the victim's confiscated possessions. Proof was not required for conviction and informants remained anonymous. A simple denunciation was enough to effect an arrest or home police invasion. No one knew who might be the next victim or who may inform on them. Mistrust and fear began to dominate all relationships among individuals.

Those who informed expected to benefit from their informing. If you always coveted that fur coat your neighbor owned, you inform the authorities and the coat is yours plus whatever else you would be permitted to remove from the home once he or she got arrested. Few people escaped this circle of horrors which touched everyone one way of another. Lyena also fell victim as she was betrayed by her personal maid, Nastasia, who had become a Soviet informant. One day the mob appeared and Nastasia was given the right to remove what she wanted from the family apartment. As she left the house, her arms laden with Baba Lyena's fur coats, she greeted her former mistress with a smirk of satisfaction.

The mob ("officials" officially) took everything of value they could carry from the Britchkin apartment but left the big pieces of furniture behind as well as linens, silver, and small things which the family managed to hold on to in secret for another 25 years. The building itself was confiscated. The family shoved into the street homeless.

To make matters worse, the Soviets began the vicious persecution of those branded as "enemies of the people" or *vrag naroda*. These were people in the merchant and entrepreneurial classes who, according to communist doctrine, could never be converted to proper Communists as they would always use their cleverness to exploit someone else. Baba Lyena, widow of a wealthy public figure who had very visibly supported Tsar and church, was now among those targeted for annihilation. They were called the "unbeaten bourgeoisie" or *"nedabitiye bourgeoisie."* To avoid the octopus tentacles of the state she withdrew into a kind of anonymity, becoming one of the *bivshiye lyudi*, or "former people"— a ghost of a person who no longer existed.

Vasily Ivanovich, the Peasant Makes Good

The homeless family still had one important resource—Anna's husband, Vasily Ivanovich. Peasant, revolutionary, blowhard, and penniless charmer, he had been considered a most unwelcome suitor and an inappropriate match for Anna. Now in the post-Revolutionary state, his radical past and his very lack of economic success proved to be an asset. A man with no assets was obviously not one who exploited others, even if it was due to incompetence and not for lack of trying.

Vasily Ivanovich now went into action. He called in favors and leaned on his past comrades. He had to tread carefully, however, for he had not belonged to the

ideologically controlling revolutionary faction, the Bolsheviks. However, ironically, his lack of success and inability to follow through with goals now stood him in good stead. His revolutionary activities had been as slipshod and ineffectual as his personal career. He fell in between the factional cracks and with his flare for the dramatic, he could play any part required of him to survive — ignorant peasant, social democrat, or marginal Bolshevik. Incompetence now became an asset.

Helen said, "This is where Papa began to shine. Dressing up in the long leather peasant coat called a *kozhuk*, he went to the new communist authorities and petitioned to be allotted a place to live based on his class background." Somehow he also managed to secure a tiny room off to the side for his mother in law's, sister, Aunt Nadya.

He was circumspect about his wife's family, avoiding her maiden name on the applications. Using his revolutionary rhetoric and role playing the bumbling peasant, he managed to acquire the corner room on the first floor of the Britchkin house where the family continued to live until they fled the Red Army during WWII. It is here that Helen grew up and spent all her youth.

The Kozhuk was a long leather coat worn by peasants with the fur on the inside for warmth. It was used as a blanket for travel and a peasant never parted with it or his boots for fear someone would steal them.

Helen made two such Kozhuks for her daughter Olga when the latter moved to Minnesota. They did not quite work with the current winter fashions but served well as costumes to wear in photos she sent home to demonstrate the severity of the upper midwest winters.

Britchkin's whole apartment building was converted to *kommunalkas* — living spaces which were cut up into tiny clusters of odd shaped rooms without kitchens or bathrooms where whole families were settled. The state determined how much square footage each person was entitled to and the existing rooms were chopped up accordingly. These allotments were small and did not include bathrooms and kitchens which were shared. A family may get a third of a sitting room and half a bedroom with others settling in the remaining spaces. Partitions went up, doors were hacked through walls, and halls were sealed and converted into bedrooms. Where privacy was needed and partitions could not be erected, people simply strung up blankets.

In 1998, Olga (one of the authors) visited a distant relative in Kiev who still lived in her original *kommunalka* allotted to her family after the Revolution. She had two rooms and was lucky to have her own bathroom which also doubled as her private kitchen because it provided access to the water and sewage pipes. A large sheet of plywood laid over the bathtub served as the work counter which could easily be lifted off when someone needed to wash. The stove stood along one wall and the toilet next to the frig.

Baba Lyena and her family now found themselves crammed into one little room in a house where they had once lived in comfort. Anna learned to cook in a makeshift kitchen they set up with a primus stove in a hallway. They shared a bathroom in another part of the house which Helen said was often clogged and always filthy. The old heavy furniture that no one else wanted was now crammed into their room pushed up against the walls in the dim hope that one day, things would return to normal and the furniture would again grace Apartment Number 2. The result was cramped, uncomfortable and chaotic, nevertheless, it was home for the next 25 years.

Baba Lyena now lived in the shadows for as the regime became more paranoid and repressive, families of wealthy merchants were targeted for arrest and execution. Silence now became a matter of life and death. Everyone lived in fear but as time went on, hope slowly slipped away and things got worse.

The building of the Lands Council originally built between 1914 and 1924 located at 33 Vladimirskaya Street on the opposite side of the block from the Britchkin's house. Imagine how it must have felt to Lyena Britchkina when, in 1934, the Soviets moved their prison for political prisoners here!

After our family fled, the facilities were expanded in the 1950's to cover the whole block with additional stark fortress like structures added facing the Britchkin house and blocking the view from the windows of the Britchkin family apartment. (Photo credit: Wikepedia)

Relationships within the little room were strained especially between Lyena and her son in law. Vasily Ivanovich continued to nurture a seething anger toward his mother-in-law for opposing his marriage and he did not hide his feelings. He was often nasty and rude to Lyena and she, totally dependent upon him, tolerated the abuse in silence. At times he completely ignored her or turned his back on her. If that seems childish, indeed it was, but Anna simply ignored and accepted. She always sided with her husband against her mother and later, her daughter.

Relations between Anna and her mother had always been strained. She had been her father's child and her mother irritated her. Pragmatic and business like, she ignored her husband's tantrums and went about the business of learning new skills and coping with day to day survival.

As time went on, driven by necessity, Anna learned to cook, haul wood, stand in shop lines for scarce goods, and scavenge what the family needed. She was physically strong and had no trouble hauling heavy water, doing laundry or carrying heavy loads. She was not particularly adept at the womanly art of creating a warm, cozy and clean home environment.

Lyena withdrew from active participation for she could not take on the work that their crippled household required. Initially, she was probably paralyzed by grief for she had lost her husband, her sons and her home. Over a few traumatic and tragic months everything she held dear and everything she depended upon for her daily existence had been wrenched out of her grasp. Her husband was dead and her sons were gone, she knew not where. She would not hear from them for about 5 years and then she would never see the two eldest again. In the end, however, even if she had wanted to contribute to the housework, she lacked the skills and the stamina for physical labor.

Shocked and traumatized, she suffered in silence, quietly tolerating her son in law's anger and her daughter's lack of support. At this point she had nothing more to lose. As time went on, and Helen grew up, Lyena found a new purpose to her life. Busy with the struggle for survival, getting food and fuel and coping with a moody and temperamental husband, Anna began to neglect her daughter who turned to her grandmother for the affection her mother could not give her.

Anna was not by nature a "warm and fuzzy" person and Helen always said her mother had lacked maternal instincts. Helen never felt her mother loved her and even thought that her mother resented her. In a hostile world full of dangers she felt herself wrapped in a cocoon which offered a secure interior but was fraught with underlying anger and frustration. Helen was an only child and her father, in his verbally abusive moments would say, "I had one child too many!" He never laid a hand on her but his language was sharp and unkind and it hurt. As a result, she turned to her grandmother for affection and the two formed a strong affective bond which lasted to the end of the latter's life.

(See the story in Helen's Youth for more details on life in the Kommunalka).

The household tension was relieved somewhat when Aunt Nadya died a few years later and Helen and her grandmother moved their beds into the tiny room up a partial stair. They still continued to eat with Vasily Ivanovich and Anna, sitting around the heavy old table that had once graced the Britchkin's elegant dining room.

↑
Baba Lyena around age 70. These were probably copies of pictures taken for some official documents either in Germany of Greece where she died in 1947. By then she had lost a lot of weight and most of her teeth.

Lyena Ivanovna Mihailenko Britchkina had aged far beyond her years. Her light blue grey eyes were bright and alert.

This photo was probably taken in Germany between 1943 and 1945, when Baba Lyena was around 74 years of age. By then she had lost most of her teeth and was suffering from some recurring bladder or kidney infection which rendered her incontinent — a tragic consequence for a homeless refugee.

She had difficulty walking and used a cane. Even so, she kept on going. She never complained and accepted all the hardship and sorrow that came her way, in a positive and resigned spirit. She died on November 27, 1947, in the small shack we called home in Picrodaphne, Paleo Faliro, Greece.

The cause of death was impossible to determine without access to a medical facility of which there were none in our area. Helen's husband, Peter thought she had a kidney infection complicated by pneumonia or cancer of the kidney. He gave the official diagnosis as the latter.

Lyena Ivanovna Mihailenko ended her life in Paleo Faliro, at the time a rustic village outside of Athens, Greece. In October of 1943 she fled Kiev with the family heading into Poland and then ended up in Germany, Italy and Greece. By the time the family left Kiev she was ill and unable to walk so she rode atop the horse cart filled with the family's earthly goods. (See the section Exodus for details of that journey)

She arrived in Athens in January of 1946 with Helen, her husband Peter, and their daughter Olga and she lived with the family until her death November of that year. She was buried in the Russian cemetery in Athens and the plot number still remains in the record books although the location of her remains are unknown.

Baba Lyena death certificate

Death Certificate of Lyena Mihailenko Britchkina

Notes: The document is an official copy from the civil registry office of Palaio Faliro, issued on the 29th of March 1950.

The original record contains the following information:
No 45
25 of November 1947, Palaio Faliro
Civil registry office at 38 Winston Churchill srt., Palaio Faliro
It says that Petros Stavrakis appeared there on the above date to announce the death of Eleni Britchkina.

Translation of the Certificate

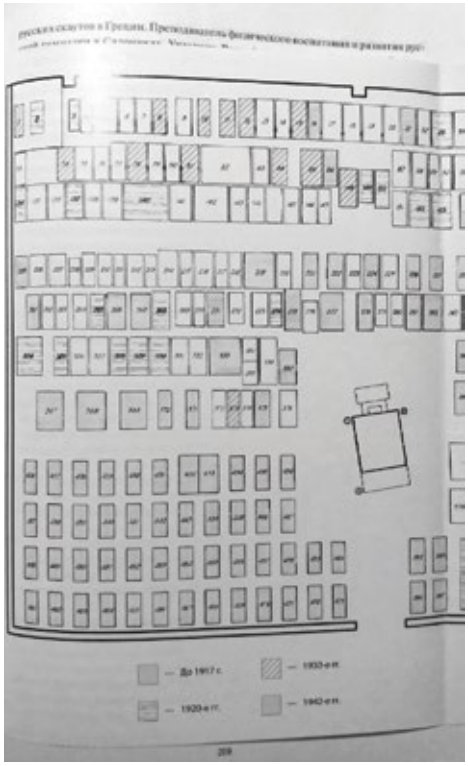
Eleni Britchkina:

Date of death: 24 of November 1947, 05:00 p.m.
Age: 74
Resident of Palaio Faliro
Born in Russia
Profession: household
Religion: Orthodox
Citizenship: unknown
Father: Ioannis
Mother: Maria
Husband: George Michailenko (The Greeks confused her patronymic here)
Her death was certified by Doctor Petros Stavrakis
Cause of death: cancer on the left kidney

Lyena Britchkina was buried in the Russian cemetery which is located near the sea to the west of Paleo Faliro. Olga remembered the funeral as taking place in a Greek cemetery near the tomb of an 18 year old girl but that was incorrect.

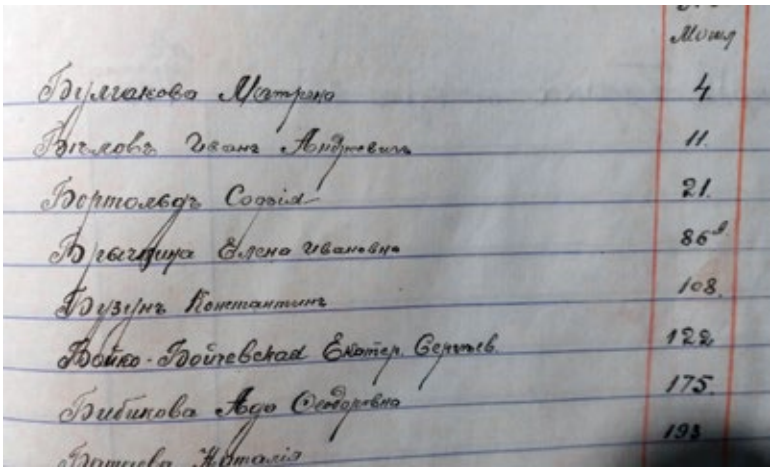
Because of lack of space unless a family tends the grave, the remains are exhumed after 7 or 9 years and then the bones are kept in boxes for some unspecified period of time before being discarded.

This record was found by our Greek assistant and we have not yet checked with the cemetery itself to learn the disposition of the remains.



Map of the Russian cemetery of Athens showing the location of plot #86 which was where Baba Lyena was buried. Whether or not remains are still there is unknown as we have not yet visited the site.

This is the Russian cemetery of Athens and is located near the sea to the west of Paleo Faliro.



This is the list of plots and Elena Ivanovna Britchina is listed as interred in plot #86. We do not know if her remains still reside there or not.

CHAPTER 4

What Happened to Baba Lyena's Boys?

Nicolai, Ivan and Sergey grew up in the house on Malopodvalnaya Street. They were being groomed for big roles in a new industrializing nation, but their futures evaporated in the Revoluton. Like their father the boys were staunch Tsarists but even if their personal philosophies might have leaned in another direction, their status as sons of Britchkin condemned them from the point of view of the future Soviets.

Like so many others, they believed that the war would end and things would return to "normal." So they continued on with their studies until the institutions closed and society fell apart. As things continued to deteriorate they, too, got caught up in the violence. They were trapped.

War robs us of choices. It takes away our freedoms and forces us into a type of prison from which escape is possible only by flight or death.

By 1919 the Britchkin boys were caught up in the horrible events churning Kiev. Canadian scholar and historian Orest Subtelny describes the events that dominated their lives at the time:

Kiev Polytechnic Institute where Nicolai Britchkin was studying Engineering when the Revolution came to Kiev.

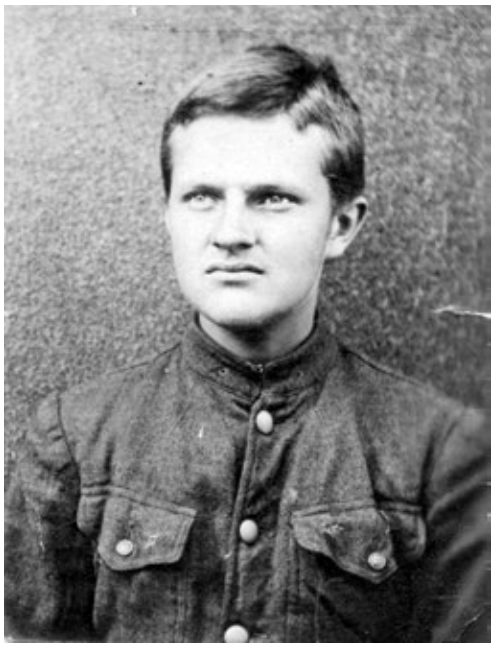
It was established in 1889 and the building was completed around 1902.

Helen entered the institute in Chemistry in 1935 and graduated in 1939 or 1940. (Old postcard; source unknown)

> In 1919 total chaos engulfed Ukraine. Indeed, in the modern history of Europe no country experienced such complete anarchy, bitter civil strife, and total collapse of authority as did Ukraine at this time. Six different armies — those of the Ukrainians, the Bolsheviks, the Whites, the Entente [French], the Poles and the anarchists — operated on its territory. Kiev changed hands five times in less than a year. Cities and regions were cut off from each other by the numerous fronts. Communications with the outside world broke down almost completely.... (Subtelny, 2000. Ukraine: A History. University of Toronto Press. p. 35).

The day of reckoning finally came for the Britchkin boys. There are several different versions of the story, but they all start in the same way. During this time of chaos in Kiev, Petliura's troops approached the city. On the other side, the Bolsheviks had taken over Moscow and Petrograd so that refugees were flooding into Kiev in an effort to escape the bloodshed.

The Tsarist forces then began to organize resistance. Nicolai and Ivan were *"summoned to the Alexander's Gymnasium"* (also known as the Alexander Museum



Sergey Britchkin, Baba Lyena's youngest son in his cadet uniform at about age 15. He went with his brothers to the Alexander Gymnasium when summoned and witnessed the slaughter of the cadets. He then followed his older brothers who joined the White (Tsarist) army.

After its defeat, he and his brothers escaped through Constantinople to Czechoslovakia and later he ended up in the US where, after many adventures and misadventure, he tragically died of a heart attack in 1954 at age 52.

The Alexander Gymnasium where the Britchkin boys were summoned to join the "cadets" serving the hastily formed Tsarist forces.

Before the Revolution, it had been a school for boys of wealthy families.

The Britchkins but hid in the bushes nearby to survey the scene. The gathered youth were betrayed and butchered by Petliura's men.

After the revolution the building was converted to the National Library. (Photo Credit: Russian Wikipedia)

which was next door) to join the "cadets" who would ostensibly defend the city against the invading forces.

As the boys approached the Gymnasium, they became suspicious and decided to hide in the shrubbery to check out the situation before going in. They saw a cluster of young men gathering in the Gymnasium yard, some of whom had been their classmates and, all Tsarist supporters. For some reason, the scene did not look right to them and they began to suspect a trap.

Much to their horror, as they watched, their young friends and classmates in the Gymnasium yard were suddenly attacked by Petliura's forces and butchered. The Britchkins quickly slipped away, went home, packed and fled Kiev joining the White Army. Sergey, who was too young for military service, tagged along as a kind of "camp follower," for to remain behind would have meant certain death.

Years later, Sergey told Helen the rest of their story of the defeat of the White Army as the brothers experienced it.

The director of this school between 1909 and 1919 was none other than Nikolay Vladimirovich Storozhenko, (Russian Wikipedia, their spelling) who was the Great Uncle of Peter Stavrakis' nephew Andryusha Storozhenko.

More can be found on him in Book 2 – Farimski -Lashkevich family of Helen's mother in law. In that book Storozhenko appears in the photo of Peter's cousin, Tatiana's, wedding.

Either he or his brother was a member of the Nationalist Club after 1908 (Photo Credit: Russian Wikipedia).

Kolya and Vanya (Nicolai and Ivan), were taken as officers, with no training. They were stationed for a short time in Kiev. When the White Army retreated in defeat, they went south with the remaining soldiers. Sergey was too young to fight — he was 14 or 15 at the time — but he stayed with his brothers and they went together. He couldn't stay behind because he would have been killed.

This incident is well documented, and described by the author, Mikhail Bulgakov, a contemporary of the Britchkin boys, who was present in the school yard but managed to escape the slaughter in a dramatic episode he later wrote about in *The White Guard*. Bulgakov wrote that young upper-class students called "cadets" were called up to form a local contingent of the Tsarist "White" army to confront the nationalist forces under Petliura. They were summoned to gather in the school grounds, which had been converted to an armory. The Bolsheviks at that time were busy consolidating their power in Moscow and Petrograd, leaving Kiev to become a battleground between various other factions.

The Cadets were mostly young students who didn't know how to handle a gun. The military commander was someone Helen remembered as "Dijinsky" (a name unknown but she was probably referring to Anton Denikin). The organizers were totally unprepared for the ambush when Petliura's forces fell upon the gathered Cadets.

Denikin's Army of Tsarist volunteers captured Kharkov on 25 June 1919. This is probably the army that recruited the cadets to Alexandrovsky Museum, although it turned out to be a trap.

Denikin's army was ultimately defeated by the Bolsheviks. Kharkov became the capital of Ukraine until 1934 when the administration was moved to Kiev. (Photo: source unknown).

In *The White Guard*, Bulgakov, who was there, describes the scene when the "cadets" and young recruits are attacked.

In Helen's words as she paraphrased Bulgakov's account…

Bulgakov described the scene thus. As the cadets gathered to defend the city, they must have already been organized into a fighting force for they had weapons, even though most did not know how to use them, and they had uniforms and insignia. The Alexander Gymnasium was then attacked by Petliura's men and when the commander realized that the battle was lost and they would all be slaughtered he ordered the young recruits to run. Petliura's men pursued them.

They scattered, some reluctantly, tearing off their uniforms as they went so they would not be identified. Many were killed. The hero of the novel

(based on Bulgakov himself) was shot on a dark street. As he struggled to get away, he ran along "Maloprovalna Street" (which is a pun on Malopodvalnaya Street, the home of the Britchkin boys. "Proval" means "failure" or "collapse"). Chased by Petliura's men and he cut into a courtyard which could have been Baba Lyena's garden since that was the most prominent courtyard in the area. He was saved by a woman who pulled him into a door near that courtyard.

The White Army, under the command of General Wrangel, suffered several defeats and retreated to Crimea, where the Reds dealt the final and bloody defeat on the Isthmus of Perekop. Helen described the Battle of Perekop (1920) as,

"...swimming in blood; the coup of communist history."

The Whites then got pinned against the sea at Sevastopol where British allies picked up as many fleeing soldiers and refugees as they could manage.

"Not all refugees got evacuated. Typhoid raged, there was no food, no roof. Through the Black Sea they were transported to the Balkans."

Russian refugees in Constantinople in 1920. With the defeat of the White Army, the Brichkin Brothers fled to Crimea and from there somehow made it to Constaninople were they joined other Russian and Ukrainian refugees.

It is here that they met the Goncharenko family from Poltava (including the young Evgenia Goncharenko), who were friends of their brother in law, Vasily Ivonavich. Eventually, they got to Czechoslovakia where they settled and Nicolai married.

Some 24 years later, Sergey Britchkin met Evgenia Goncharenko again in Paris as he fled the Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia. By then she had married and was either widowed or divorce and had a daughter. They married and came to the US on January 16, 1952 where he not two years later of a heart attack at age 52. (Photo source unknown)

The town of Perekop itself was wiped out. Years later, Olga (one of the authors) met a British Brigadier General who was co-lecturer on a ship in the Black Sea, and he told how his father had evacuated White Army soldiers in Crimea after the defeat.

According to Natasha Kravtchenko, Sergey's stepdaughter,

"The brothers escaped to Constantinople (Istanbul). Turkey was also a defeated country. Or, to use the old name, they left Novorossiya (part of what was South Russia, now Ukraine). From Constantinople, they went on to Czechoslovakia, where all three settled.

Czechoslovakia was supportive of Tsarist refugees and the White Army and many Czech had joined the fighting on the tsarist side in the Czech Legion, a voluntary army made up of western Slavs. They fought the Bolsheviks in Siberia and even controlled the Trans-Siberian Railroad for about a whole year. In 1920, the Legion concluded an armistice with the Bolsheviks and was evacuated via Vladivostok after having sustained heavy losses partly caused by the inability of the Whites to unify and organize.

In Czechoslovakia, Nicolai married and sent his mother photos of himself with his wife. Ivan practiced law. Sergey went to university.

Nicolai Britchkin

(b. January 31, 1893, Kiev — d. ca. 1939, Brno, Czechoslovakia)

Nicolai Gregoreevich Britchkin born January 31, 1893 and died in Czechoslovakia in exile sometime 1942.

What we know of Nicolai comes mostly from a few documents found in the archives and photos mailed to his mother and sister. He was already in Czechoslovakia in 1924 for documents from the Kiev City Archives show that in that year his mother requested a transcript from the Kiev Polytechnic Institute to be sent to his new university in Czechoslovakia. This could not have been easy or safe for her to do for if anyone had recognized her name, she could have been arrested but that fortunately did not happen.

In Czechoslovakia Nicolai completed the engineering degree he had started some years previously in Kiev and settled in Brno where he married but had no children. He died of a heart attack at age 46.

Helen remembered an envelope with black edging addressed to Baba Lyena arriving at their home in Kiev around 1940. Baba Lyena looked at it and said, *"I know what this is. Kolya is dead."*

Archival Data collected by V. Kovalinsky:

Nicolai Grigorievich Britchkin was christened in the St. Sophia Cathedral. His God parents were Engineer-Technician Ivan Dmitreevich Musatov and Merchant Maria Yakovlevna Mihailenko (his grandmother).

On the 17 of April 1902 he entered Gymnasium #I which he finished on the 28th of May 1911 with a silver medal. He received a grade of "Excellent in all subjects except Mathematics and was not certified in the Greek language.

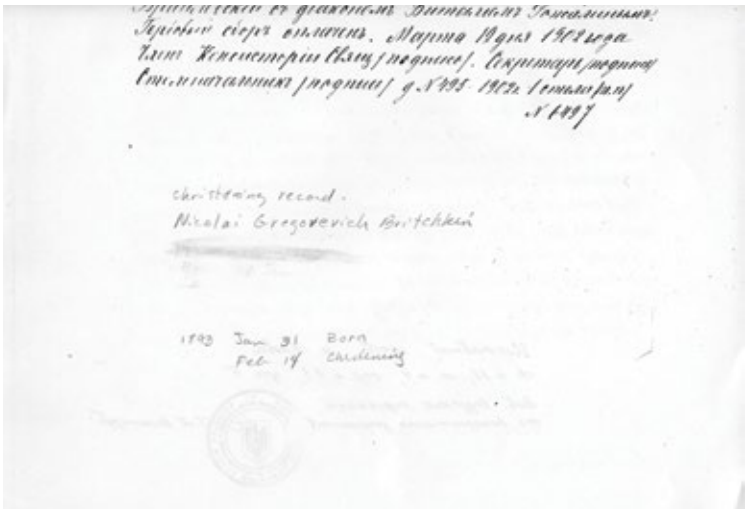
In the fall of 1914 he entered the Kiev Polytecnic Institute as a first year student in the Mechanical (Engineering) Faculty. This coincided with the beginning of the First World War which interrupted his studies and he joined the artillery school, from which he then entered active service in the army where he served in the radio telegraph department.

In March 1918 he returned to the Kiev Polytecnic Institute to continue his studies.

At that time he was living in the family house on Malopodvalnaya No. 12 in Apartment 7.

In December of 1923 his mother made a request to the director of the KPI for her son's transcripts and documents. In that request the address is still in the same building but now in Apartment 5.

It appears that when Lyena made her request for transcripts she did not say he was outside of the country. All we know is that he joined the White Army probably around 1919 and in December 1923 he wrote to his mother from exile.

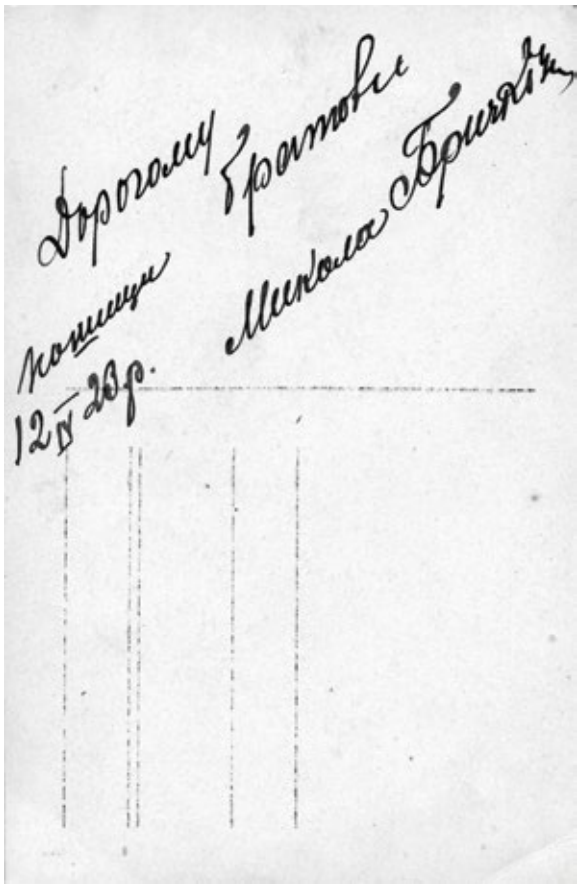

christening record.
Nicolai Gregorevich Britchkin

1893 Jan 31 Born
Feb 14 Christening

Nicolai Britchkin certificate of Christening February 14, 1893.

Various photos of Nicolai some taken before he fled Kiev, during his service in the White Army and livng in exile in Brno, Czechoslovakia. He marred and sent home pictures of his wife but they had no children.

He died in 1939 of a heart attack at age 46 in 1939 and his brother Sergey, who is shown supporting his sister in law, sent their mother pictures of the funeral. The first photo, now faded, shows Nicolai in repose on a bier his face is on the right side of the photo.



Photos of Nicolai's funeral in Brno, Czechoslovakia. Date unknown. He died of a heart attack.

Sergey Britchkin on the right and he appears to be escorting Nicolai's wife totally veiled in black who is walking on his left.
↓

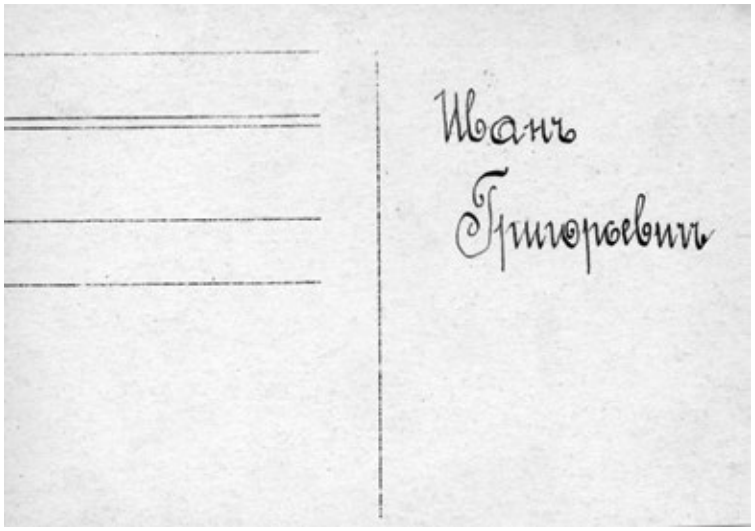

CHARITAS
CHARITAS

Ivan (Vanya) Britchkin

b. July 24, 1894, Kiev — d. Czechoslovakia, (The Carpaths) April 17, 1931 (murdered)

We know the least about Ivan. He lived in the "Carpaths," which is a mountainous area partially in Czechoslovakia, and worked as a lawyer investigating various groups for fraud.

One night, his landlady said, two men came looking for him. She heard them talking, then they all left. Vanya's body was later discovered hanging. We don't know the date of his death, let alone anything else about him.



Ivan Britchkin escaped with his brothers to Czechoslovakia in 1922. After exile he was known to be living in the Carpaths and practicing law, investigating various groups for fraud. One day, he was found hanging in his rooms by his landlady. We do not know the date.

Sergey Britchkin

(19 June 1902, Kiev, Ukraine — 4 August 4, 1954, New York, USA)

Sergey Britchkin in Czechoslovakia where he lived from the Revolution to the end of WWII. On January 16, 1952 he came to the US but died not quite two years after.

Our great uncle Sergey was known to the authors for he managed to get to the US around 1950 with his wife and stepdaughter. His trials in Europe left him traumatized and shortly after he came to the US, he died of a heart attack in 1954. He had left his home and his mother at about age 14 and from then on he was a man growing up and living without a country and without a home.

Over the years he always tried and periodically succeeded to make contact with the rest of his family. In 1943 he came to visit our fleeing family members in the Nazi hospital in Katowice (occupied Poland). There he saw his mother for the last time.

He was an upbeat person with a cheerful disposition who laughed heartily and like to tell jokes — a feat that had to be difficult considering his family life had fallen apart in his youth. Not many fourteen-year olds could have kept a cheerful disposition under such circumstances and that was only the beginning of his trials.

Helen described him as a dedicated man who worked hard to obtain an education against tremendous odds. In Czechoslovakia, he attended a famous "gymnasium" (or high school) and then university, completing his degree as an engineer.

The family that left Kiev together in October of 1943 spent the winter of 1943-44 in the occupied city of Katowice where the authors' father, Peter, worked in the hospital that served Polish miners.

Originally the family was headed toward Czechoslovakia to meet up with Anna's brothers but by then the two older men were dead and only Sergey Britchkin was left. He came to visit the family in Katowice and brought food and clothing.

His mother, Baba Lyena, stands in front with the cane, Peter, Anna holding Olga (one of the authors), and Vasily Ivanovich. In the background stands the hospital. This visit or one like it was the last time Baba Lyena would see her last surviving son for she died three years later in Athens.

One of the last times, Mother and Son would meet. On this photo the resemblance between them is evident as they both look toward their right.

Left to right: Sergey, Baba Lyena, Anna, Helen, Olga and Vasily Ivanovich.

Sergey holding Olga on the hospital grounds in Katowice.

This was one of the last times we saw him until we met again in the US around 1952. He united with his sister and her family as soon as he arrived in the US.

He was, by Helen's account, a very social person whose

> "life revolved around work, drink, and women."

He gained the reputation of being a "gay blade," or party animal, marrying late in life. When he visited us in Katowice, he brought food and very pretty women's dresses of fine quality donated by lady friends, which his sister Anna refashioned into dresses for the infant Olga. From the design of the clothes, Helen suspected that his lady friends may have been "less than reputable."

Musing about her uncle's lady friends, Helen recalled…

> They had exceptional clothing. In fact, I had a big box of wonderful dresses, such as I had never seen the like of before. I could never have worn them. Imagine, they were fancy with flowers and so on! So I put this box in the basement storage and there it remained. Babushka, of course, was delighted to see her son again.

Sergey had lived a life of escape, fear, and more escape. On the eve of WWII he did not feel safe in Czechoslovakia especially as the Red Army started advancing into Poland and Germany. Only 20 years before he had escaped the Soviets the first time around, on foot, and he was afraid of a repetition if they managed to successfully push westward. The Red Army had a reputation for brutality when they occupied a defeated territory, especially toward escaping Russians who were severely punished. Sergey's worries were justified by history. Those Russian with his background who were attempting to flee were tortured and executed.

As the Nazi's collapsed, Sergey fled west to escape the advancing Soviet Army, while Baba Lyena, Anna, Vasily Ivanovich, and Helen ended up in Greece. After their last reunion at Kaowice, mother and son never met again.

Toward the end of the war, Sergey was alone. His brothers had both died and his sister and her family were stuck in Germany. In his stepdaughter Natasha's telling, General Patton's American army was delayed approaching Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet army got to Prague first.

Thus, rather than fall into Soviet hands, he decided to flee westward alone, *"On poshol"* —literally, he set out on foot just a few hours' time ahead of the Red Army, leaving all his belongings behind. He was headed for Paris. Helen remembers receiving news of his desperate escape while they were living in Greece.

Natasha, his stepdaughter, recalled…

> As a measure of last resort he had taken with him a poison capsule. The route to Paris was through the Soviet Zone, and "That was terrible." The Reds were fast approaching and Sergey was now trapped. There was no way out. Sergey took the poison.

The next thing he remembered he was in a hospital in the French part of the tripartite zone and they pumped life back into him (*"evo otkachali"* — an idiomatic expression meaning they "resuscitated him" bringing him back from the brink of death).

> When he got on his feet, he had no documents; all had been destroyed. A Frenchman took him aside and said, "La France c'est par la..." pointing him in the relevant direction. So he picked himself up and walked on. Sick, tired, and without identity, Sergey managed to somehow drag himself to Paris where he went straight to a Russian church where they fed him and gave him a cot to sleep on.

Sometime earlier, when he was still in touch with his family, Sergey's brother in law, Vasily Ivanovich, had written to him that if he got to Paris, he should look up his friends from Poltava, Ukraine, the Goncharenkos.

As it turned out, Evgenia Goncharenko (1902–1972), the daughter of Vasily Ivanovich's friend, was caring for refugees at that Paris church and as she leaned over his cot to give him water, much to her surprise, she recognized Sergey. They had met briefly some 25 years before in a refugee camp in Constantinople, where the Goncharenkos had also fled, during the dreadful escape from Crimea following the defeat of the White Army. Both had been only teenagers at the time.

Vasily Ivanovich came from Nichiporovka, a village near Poltava, and various members of the two families had known each through the years. He had often attended social evenings in the Goncharenko home where singing had been a favorite passtime. In additon, other ties had also bound the two families together as when their children attended the same university. In recounting these relationships, Natasha remarked how extraordinary it was that they all knew each other—"six degrees of separation in that enormous country!"

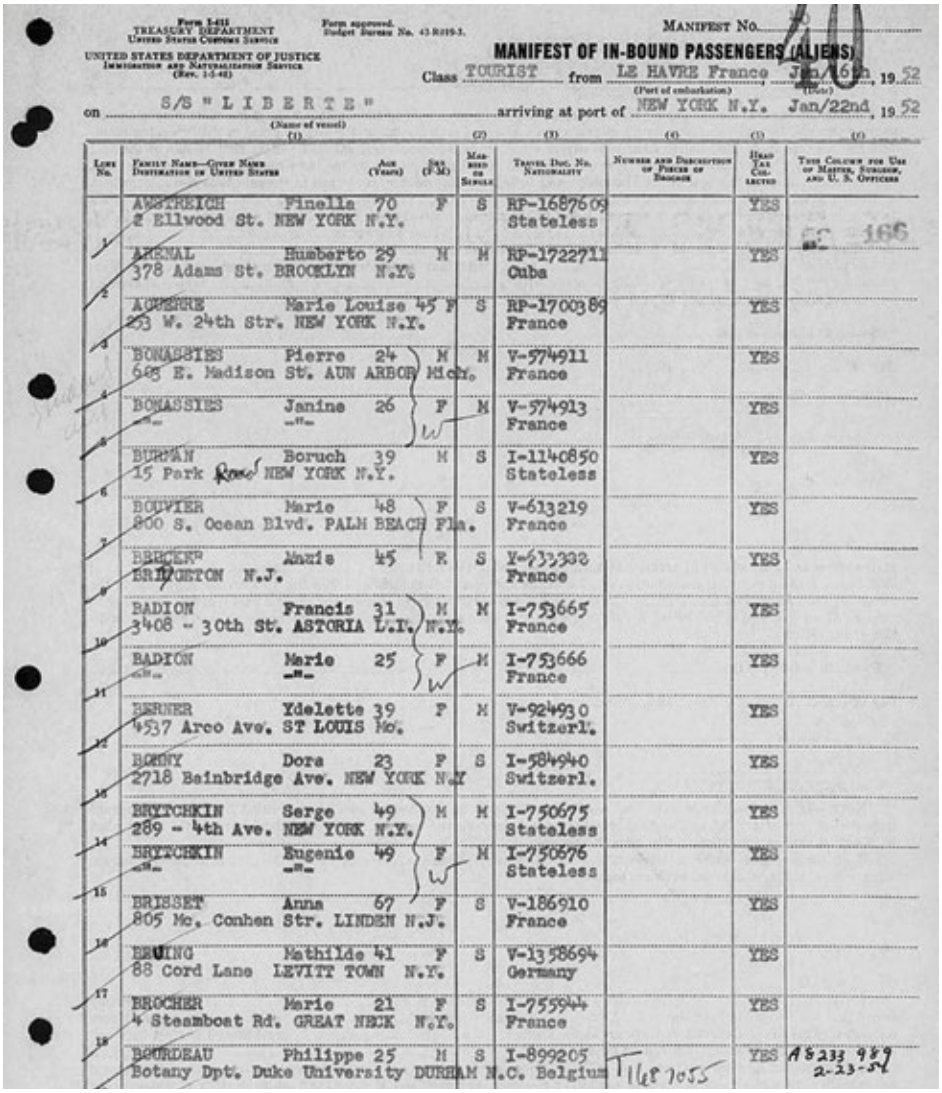
Evgenia (Zhenya) Goncharenko (or, Eugenie as she was known in France) had emigrated to Paris during the Revolution where she married, gave birth to her daughter, Natalia Kravtchenko (b. October 31, 1927 — d. August 30, 2008) and either divorced or was widowed. Zhenya and her daughter lived in the Russian community and Natasha attended Russian schools, mastering both languages to an exceptional degree. She never set foot on her ancestral Ukrainian soil, but she did visit Russia for the first time when she was almost eighty years old.

She recalled an incident around 1947 or 1948 when some of Sergey's friends from Czechoslovakia came to dinner at their home in Paris. They expressed optimism about their adopted country and confidence that Czechoslovakia would soon be free of the Soviets. Benes, the second president, had returned, and his son was a minister. "The communists will not reach us," they said. Of course, that is not how it went. In 1948, the communists occupied Czechoslovakia and "*Всё пошло к чорту*" — everything went to the devil.

After 1945, the family lost track of Sergey until 1952 when he turned up in the US with his wife and step-daughter. Helen said that in Paris Sergey had made a good living as a successful engineer and even won a prestigious competition for a bridge he had designed. However, he always feared the proximity of France to the communists who had loomed over him since his youth. Until then, he had spent all his life fleeing westward until he landed in the US where he ultimately found peace but died not long after.

Sergey died of a heart attack at the age of 52 in 1954. He was first buried in some East Coast cemetery but Natasha had his remains moved to Novo-Diveevo Cemetery in Nanuet, New York next to those of her mother. This Russian Orthodox cemetery is home to a number of prominent members of the Russian émigré community in the United States and it reflects Natasha's deep attachment to those Russians who spent much of their lives as stateless homeless souls.

From the time Sergey fled Kiev he was stateless and so he died stateless before he could get US citizenship. This is documented on the manifest for the *France*.



MANIFEST OF IN-BOUND PASSENGERS (ALIENS)

Class TOURIST from LE HAVRE France Jan/16th 19 52

on S/S "LIBERTE" arriving at port of NEW YORK N.Y. Jan/22nd 19 52

Line No.	Family Name—Given Name / Destination in United States	Age (Years)	Sex (F.M)	Married or Single	Travel Doc. No. Nationality	Number and Description of Pieces of Baggage	Head Tax Collected	Time Column for Use of Master, Surgeon, and U. S. Officers
	AUSTREICH Finella 2 Ellwood St. NEW YORK N.Y.	70	F	S	RP-1687609 Stateless		YES	
1	ARENAL Humberto 378 Adams St. BROOKLYN N.Y.	29	M	M	RP-1722711 Cuba		YES	
2	AUBERRE Marie Louise 253 W. 24th Str. NEW YORK N.Y.	45	F	S	RP-1700389 France		YES	
3	BONASSIES Pierre 648 E. Madison St. ANN ARBOR Mich.	24	M	M	V-574911 France		YES	
4	BONASSIES Janine -"-	26	F W	M	V-574913 France		YES	
5	BURMAN Boruch 15 Park Road NEW YORK N.Y.	39	M	S	I-1140850 Stateless		YES	
6	BOUVIER Marie 800 S. Ocean Blvd. PALM BEACH Fla.	48	F	S	V-613219 France		YES	
7	BERCLE Annie BRIGHTON N.J.	45	F	S	V-533308 France		YES	
8	BADION Francis 3408 - 30th St. ASTORIA L.I. N.Y.	31	M	M	I-753665 France		YES	
10	BADION Marie -"-	25	F W	M	I-753666 France		YES	
11	BERNER Ydelette 4537 Arco Ave. ST LOUIS Mo.	39	F	M	V-924930 Switzerl.		YES	
12	BONNY Dora 2718 Bainbridge Ave. NEW YORK N.Y	23	F	S	I-584940 Switzerl.		YES	
13	BRYTCHKIN Serge 289 - 4th Ave. NEW YORK N.Y.	49	M	M	I-750675 Stateless		YES	
14	BRYTCHKIN Eugenie -"-	49	F W	M	I-750676 Stateless		YES	
15	BRISSET Anna 805 Mc. Conhen Str. LINDEN N.J.	67	F	S	V-186910 France		YES	
16	BRUNG Mathilde 88 Cord Lane LEVITT TOWN N.Y.	41	F	S	V-1358694 Germany		YES	
17	BROCHER Marie 4 Steamboat Rd. GREAT NECK N.Y.	21	F	S	I-755944 France		YES	
18	BOURDEAU Philippe Botany Dpt. Duke University DURHAM N.C.	25	M	S	I-899205 Belgium	T168 7055	YES	A8233 989 2-23-54

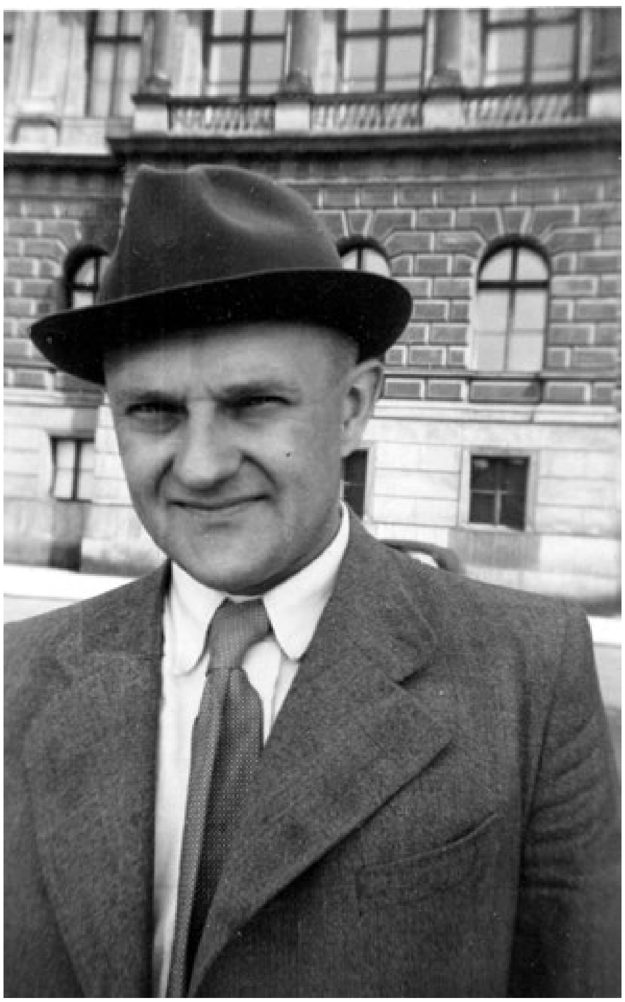
The is the manifest of the *France* showing the names of Serge Brytchkin and Eugenie Brytchkin and further down, in alphabetic order, the name of Mathalie Kravtchenko. Spelling was never accurate on these manifests.

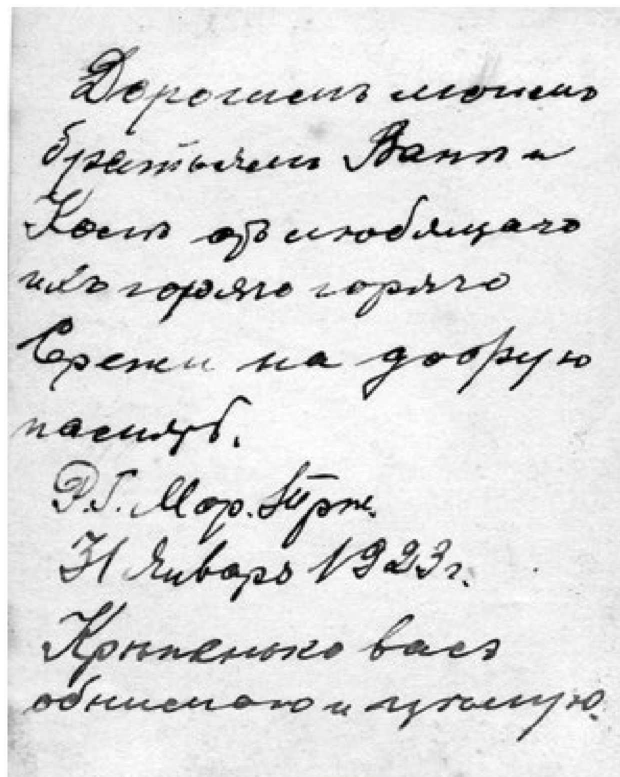
Sergey always tried to keep in touch with our family, no matter where he was, where we were and how difficult it may have been to send and receive mail. His letters tried to bring the family closer to his life, which, in spite of his social nature, was somewhat lonely. These photos include some of his youth and others he sent during the war.

Grave of Sergey Gregorievich Britchkin, born 19 June 1902, Kiev Ukraine, and died 4 August 1954, New York, USA of heart attack.

Laid to rest next to his wife Evgenia Nikiforovna Goncharenko Brichkina, born 6 July 1902, probably in Poltava and died 8 February 1972 in the USA. In Novo Diveevo Cemetery, Nanuet, NY, USA.

Grave of Natasha Kravtchenko, stepdaughter of Sergey Britchkin and close friend of Helen Stavrakis, in Novo Diveevo Russian Orthodox Cemetery in Nanuet, NY, USA. She was laid to rest next to her mother and stepfather. She was born around 1925 and died in 2008.

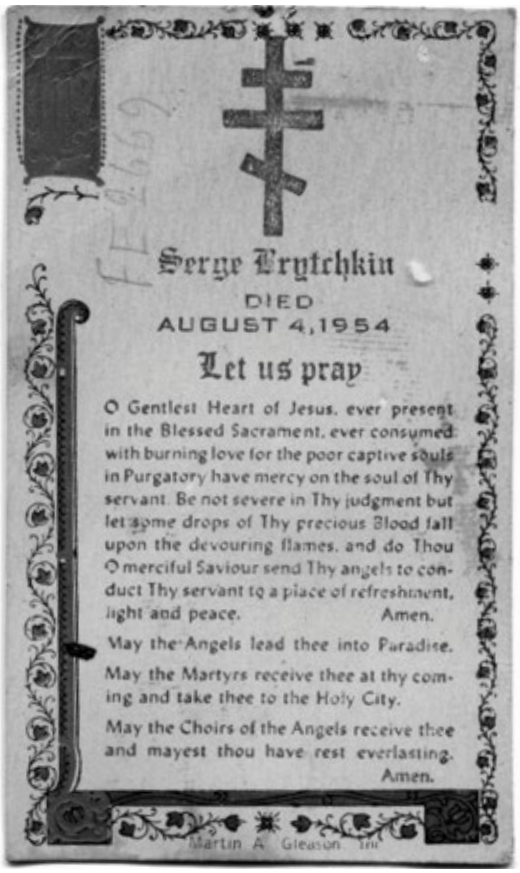




Дорогимъ моимъ
братьямъ Ваня и
Костя отъ любящаго
ихъ горячо горячо
Сережи на добрую
память.
Р.Г. Мор. Штрм.
31 Января 1923 г.
Крепенько васъ
обнимаю и цѣлую.

Это я в 1946 году.

Брычкинъ
Сергѣй Григорьевичъ



Serge Erytchkin

DIED

AUGUST 4,1954

Let us pray

O Gentlest Heart of Jesus, ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, ever consumed with burning love for the poor captive souls in Purgatory have mercy on the soul of Thy servant. Be not severe in Thy judgment but let some drops of Thy precious Blood fall upon the devouring flames, and do Thou O merciful Saviour send Thy angels to conduct Thy servant to a place of refreshment, light and peace. Amen.

May the Angels lead thee into Paradise.

May the Martyrs receive thee at thy coming and take thee to the Holy City.

May the Choirs of the Angels receive thee and mayest thou have rest everlasting. Amen.

Martin A. Gleason, Inc.

Wilmington, DE 1952 the Britchkins visit the Stavrakis Family. Left to right: Genya (Sergey's wife), Vasily Ivanovich (behind), Olga and Steven Stavrakis, Sergey, Natasha Kravtchenko (Sergey's step daughter) on Broom Street, at the Stavrakis home in Wilmington, DE.

Sergey came to visit as often as he could and wanted to unite the family as many of the refugees did. But in the US, despite great efforts, it was not possible to rebuild the community that the refugees had in Kiev.

He died of heart attack in August of 1954. Genya survived him until 1972. Natasha, her daughter, Sergey's stepdaughter, maintained a friendship with Helen for the rest of her life. She died in 2008.

Sergey playing with Stevie in the empty lot behind the apartment house we lived in on Broom Street, Wilmington DE, USA.

Left to right: Steven (Helen and Peters second child, born in Athens), Peter, and Sergey in Wilmington, DE, USA in 1951.

In the Background St. Elizabeth's Church can be seen. This picture was taken in the empty lot behind the apartment house we lived in on Broom Street. Peter was working as an intern at Wilmington General Hospital

Sergey, on the left; Genya, his wife, second from the right; and unknown friends probably in New York.

Left to Right: Unknown woman, Sergey and his wife, Genya (Eugenia Goncharenko Britchkina). Unknown location.

Photo taken on Broom Street in Wilmington Delaware 1952. Left to Right: Natasha Kravtchenko (Sergey Britchkin's step daughter); Genya Britchkin (Sergey's wife); Volodya Lash (born in 1901 as Vladimir Lashkevich and escaped after the defeat of the White Army ending up in New York. He was Peter Stavrakis's first cousin and heir to the Lashkevich estates); Thalia Langadas (wife of Alexander Langadas and daughter in law of Anna Nikonorovna who was a family friend in Athens and who lent our family the camera with which Helen took photos published in Book 8.)

Unknown woman and her daughter but either a relatives or friend of Sergey's. Probably in Europe. They appear on various photographs over time but without labels.

The Legend of the Tsar's Gold

To this day, there is a mysterious story of a trainload of the Tsar's gold that disappeared and ended up in Czechoslovakia. No one can corroborate it and the gold has never been found, but Natasha always said that Sergey's education was paid for by the Tsar's gold and Helen had heard the same from her uncle.

At the start of the Russian Revolution, Czechoslovakia did not exist as a separate country but was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from which they wanted to separate. As a result of various tradeoffs, the Czechs formed what came to be known as The Czech Legion, a volunteer army that joined the White Army to fight against the Bolsheviks in hopes of eventually getting support for a free Czechoslovakia once the tsarist forces took back control of the country.

They fought mostly in Siberia where they succeeded in capturing the Trans-Siberian Railroad and holding it for tsarist forces for about a year. During that time, a shipment of imperial gold from the Tsar's coffers was being transported eastward and mysteriously disappeared. Legend had it that it was captured and hidden by the Czech Legion. No one knows what happened to this gold and it was never seen again. Some claim it ended up in Czechoslovakia while others say it vanished.

The Czechs formed a legion of volunteers to help fight against the Bolsheviks in the Revolution in return for hopes of getting help to form a free Czechoslovakia. They ended up fighting in Siberia, captured and held the Trans Siberian Railroad for almost a year and then made a deal with the Bolsheviks for safe passage home via Vladivostok.

There is a story that they seized a trainload of Tsarist gold which later ended up in their country although the gold has never been found. Some family stories tell that the Britchkin boys received benefits and education paid for by the "Tsar's gold."

Helen's was told that the Czech Legion was composed of former Austro-Hungarian soldiers who were mainly Slavs. They went to fight in Russia to support the White Army and upon reaching the Russian front, they experienced a change of heart and surrendered to the Reds because they considered themselves "Brother Slavs"—*Bratya Slavyani*. At some point they found themselves in Siberia and cut off from any route home. That version was not quite correct.

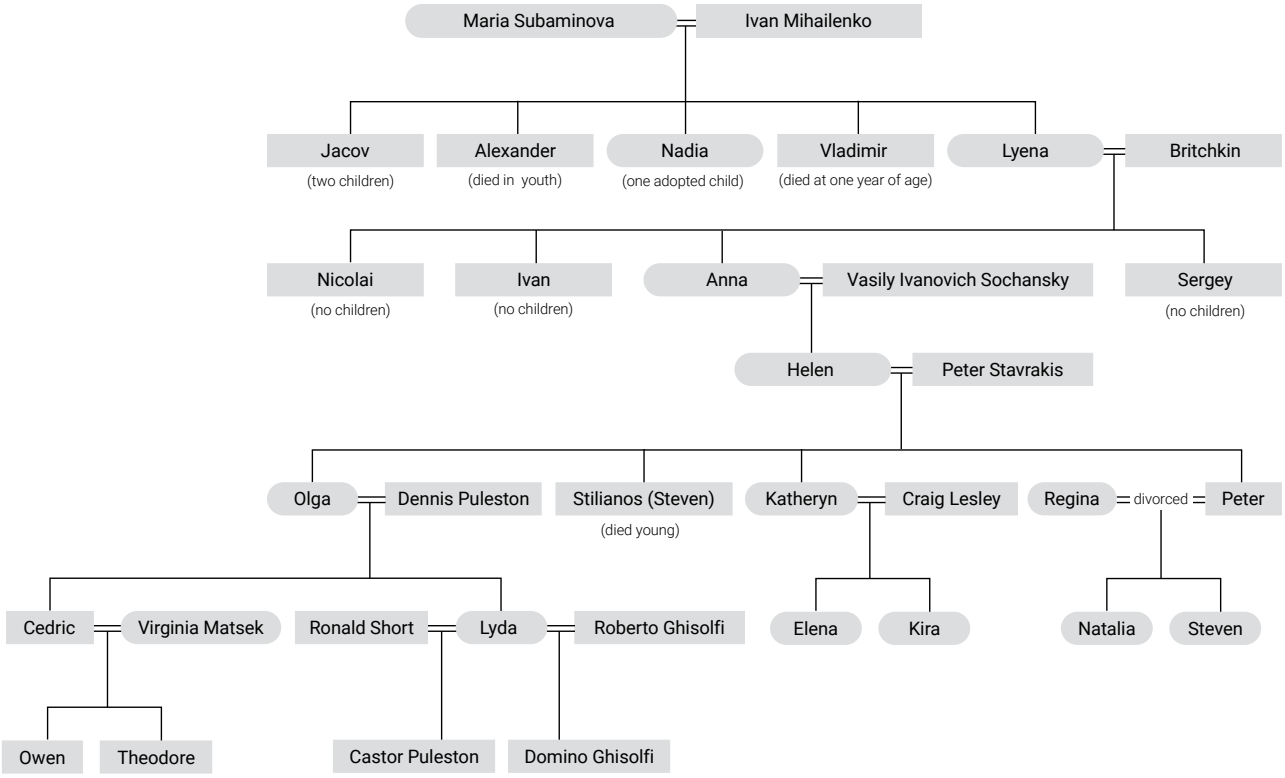
They did surrender to the Reds. When the White army leader, Kolchak, had been captured not because they sided with the Reds but because they found themselves in a no-win situation. They negotiated with Leon Trotsky and the Bolsheviks for safe passage to Vladivostok and eventually got back to their homeland with, according to some sources, at least some of the imperial gold that disappeared during the Revolution. Thereafter both the Czechs and some Slovaks continued to support the anti-Bolshevik forces.

According to Natasha, some of this gold was used to help the Russian White Army refugees and it was always said that Sergey's university expenses were paid for by the "Tsar's gold." It is impossible to verify this version of the story, but it was so prevalent and persistent for many years that one would think there must have been at least some truth behind it. The one fact that is known for certain is that Sergey's education was paid by somebody and it was not his family or himself. He believed it came from a fund for Tsarist refugees.

Natasha was told that prominent Czech leaders, including Karamazh, the first prime minister of the new Czechoslovakia, and Masaryk, the first president, gave grants to Russian emigré students whose studies had been disrupted by the Revolution and that the Britchkin brothers received such aid. However, Helen had been told by her uncle that they were not considered equal to nationals and at university Sergey and other refugees had to stand in the back of lecture halls while the nationals occupied seats. They may have been supported by the Tsar's gold but in Czechoslovakia they were still treated as second class citizens.

CHAPTER 5

Maternal Line of Lyena Mihailenko Britchkina (Helen's Grandmother; "Baba Lyena")



Baba Lyena's Mother — Maria Yakovlevna Subaminova
(b. 1846 — d. after 1910)

Portrait of Maria and Ivan, taken of a small painted miniature, which was the only portrait Helen or her family had of her great grandmother and great grandfather.

Baba Lyena was the fifth child born to parents whose ancestry can be traced back at least 200 years in Kiev. The family was native to the Podol district, the commercial center of trade, craft and manufacturing for the City of Kiev. Founded by Viking Rus traders sometime after the 5th century as a rest stop and waystation along the route between the Baltic states and Constantinople the Podol provided specialized services such as warehousing, boat repairs, and marketing. Still today various subdivisions of the district bear their ancient names such as "leatherworks, ceramics," and "tar pit."

Helen grew up knowing only a few disjointed anecdotes about her maternal great grandmother, Maria, who was one of the people it was dangerous to remember after the Revolution because as a successful business woman and property owner she was classified as an evil "exploiter" of people.
Her history was buried but luckily, not destroyed.

In 2014, the historian Kovalinsky located a treasure trove of documents which brought Maria back into the light and when we came upon the website oldkiev.top, we discovered even more details about her home and property. Our research paused when Kovalinsky passed away, but we fully plan to continue sometime in the future.

This view of Svyato-Chresto Vozdvizhenskaya Church (Exaltation of the Cross) in 1891, view from Castle Hill also known as Bald Mountain in Mussorsky's composition. Maria and Ivan got married and their children probably were baptized here as well.

The church stands on the corner where Vozdvizhenskaya Street meets the lane of the same name. During Maria's time both were together under the name of "street." Maria's property and orchard would have stood on the left if facing the church.

The author Bulgakov was christened here also in 1891. (photo credit: Kiev archive)

Maria Yackovlevna Subaminova married Ivan Mihailenko on October 23, 1863 *(note: all dates in this chapter are in the Old Style calendar)* in the Kresto-Vozdvizhenska Church (Exaltation of the Cross Church) on the corner of Vozdvizhenskaya Street and the lane by the same name, in the Podol sector of Kiev. She was 17 and Ivan, 21. They had five children four of whom survived to adulthood. The first, Yakov, born in 1864, was known to Helen as "Uncle Yasha." He became a prominent chemist and survived until 1943; Nadezhda, "Aunt Nadya," was born in 1866 and died after the revolution probably around 1925 while living with Helen's family.

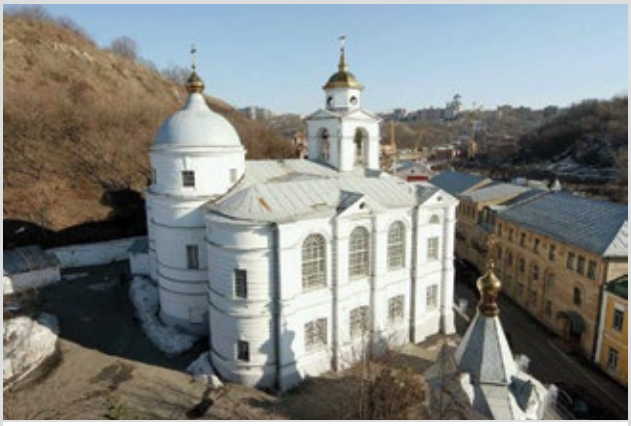
The third child, Alexander, was born in 1868 and reportedly died by suicide while a student at the University of Kiev (although this story of his death seems very similar to that of Vasily Ivanovich's older brother, Alexander, who died of Tuberculosis while at University in Kiev, around 1900.) It could be a mix up of some kind.

Then came little Vladimir, who survived only one year in 1871, followed by Baba Lyena, Helen's grandmother, who was the youngest child, born in 1873 and died in Athens as a refugee in 1947.

Exaltation of the Cross Church, Vozdvizhenska Str., Kiev, Ukraine

The original version of this church was commissioned by the Grand Prince Mstislav Udatniy (Mistoslav the Lucky) and dates back to the 13th century. Built on the location where today stands St. Andrew Church, it was dedicated to the guilds of tanners and crockers.

It was rebuilt in wood at the expense of the residents in the Vozdvizhenka region in 1746 but destroyed in the great Podol fire of 1811. The residents then rebuilt the church again at their own expense, which took almost 100 years to complete around 1863.



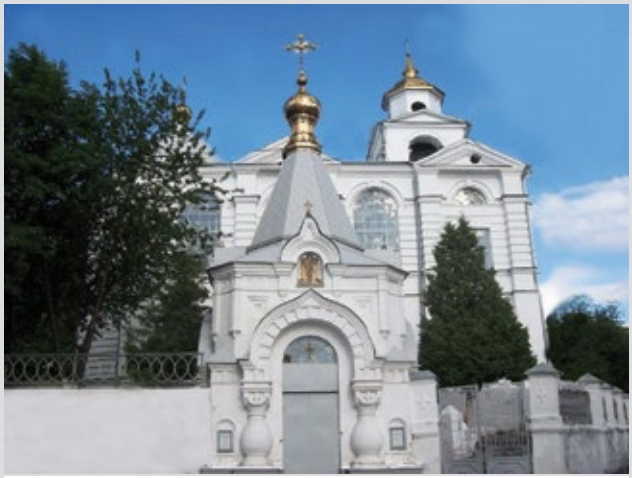
This church stands on the corner of Vozdvizhanskaya Street and the lane by the same name. Maria's dry jam processing facility stood one house plot away from the church on the lane. The orchard was behind the house and behind that, stood the Florovsky Monastery for women which butted up against Bald Mountain.

The Kresto-Vozdvizhenskaya Church as it looks today (Source: http://www.trip-points.com/churches-and-other-places-of-worship/holy-cross-church-krestovozdvizhenskaya-church.html).

After the revolution of 1917 this Church somehow remained in service until 1935 when the last abbot, Theodosius Pavlovsky, was exiled to Siberia and the church was finally closed. Services were resumed a few years later and today it continues to serve as a major focus for the local community. Maria and Ivan's children were all baptized here, as was the famous Kievan author Mikhail Bulgakov.

Another view of the Kresto-Vozdvizhenskaya Church. The street by that name extends from the church toward the right and back. To the left and up against the hill the small lane of the same name passes in front of Maria's dry jam processing buildings and orchard.

St. Andrews Church can be seen behind on the horizon. (Photo Credit: Kiev Archives)



Kresto-Vozdvizhenskaya Church (Exaltation of the Cross Church) on the Podol as it looks at the time of this writing. (Photo credit: Wikipemedia)

Maria Widowed at Thirty-One

Ivan was known as a nice looking, mild mannered, friendly man without much ambition. Family lore said he spent too much time drinking, partying and possibly philandering. One story which resembles many a literary romantic tale, but which everyone believed and dutifully repeated, tells of an incident when Maria and Ivan were young and he was a party animal.

The tale in Helen's words…

> One day Ivan was invited to a "Ball Masque"—masked ball, which he attended without his wife as was his custom. Maria, who was not naive, smelled a rat. Being a woman of action, she decided that something had to be done about her wayward husband. So, after he left for the ball, she dressed herself in costume and mask, ordered a carriage, and followed him to the ball where she flirted with him, without being recognized.
>
> He was so enchanted with this mysterious woman that when she enticed him to join her for a late visit to her home, he agreed. On the way home, imagine his surprise when the desired object of his attentions took off her mask to reveal none other than his lovely and determined wife. No one ever told me what the conversation was after that!

Ivan died of Tuberculosis at the young age of 36 in 1878, leaving Maria with five young children and not much money. Baba Lyena was only five years old.

As Helen recounted the story…

> Something had to be done! So Maria went to St. Petersburg, where friends introduced her to Balabukha, the largest and most famous producer of preserves and fruit candy in Russia. She asked the Balabukhas to help her learn the business, as Kiev was a gold mine for fruit and berries. Her education finished, Maria went back home, opened her own business, and prospered.

At that time in Kiev, a lucrative new industry was being developed by a local entrepreneur, Semyon Semyonovich Balabukha, who introduced a process for making various types of confections by boiling fruit in super saturated sugar syrup. This process was around for centuries in the east, and one product so manufactured was a confection called "dry jam." This was well suited to larger fruit such as pears, apples, oranges and peaches and resulted in a preserve that could be spread on bread or eaten as a candy. Berries were generally made into a hard candy by saturating and coating with crystalline sugar. From what Helen was told, this latter was Maria's specialty.

Dry jam was one type of candied fruit that was not really dry but soft and coated with a thick sugar syrup. It could be spread on bread or eaten as a sweet.

Candied fruit was also made by coating with layers of crystallized sugar. Berries prepared in this manner kept their color and flavor but could last long periods of time. Kiev became famous for this product in the late 19th Century. (Photo credit http://kyivweekly.com.ua/style/etno/2010/11/01/164453.html)

Production was labor intensive so Balabukha taught others, especially women, to manufacture the fruit. Then he acted as a middle man opening markets all over the empire. He had such success that even the imperial household regularly purchased his fruit.

The center of manufacture was in the Podol and Balabukha's main shop was in Kiev on the prestigious commercial street, the Kreschatik. Maria, who knew the Balabukhas, learned to make these sweets from one of the family members and established a very lucrative and successful business of her own.

This business required a considerable amount of capital both for start up and for operation. Maria needed buildings, ovens, workers' pay, the fruit itself and large quantities of sugar. It is likely that her relations assisted her financially. She had a large network of commercial relatives on the Podol and from the records we know that her in-laws had assets for they bought and sold properties amongst themselves. Her mother in law who had also been widowed young ran was also self sufficient and even purchased several houses.


КІЕВСКОЕ ВАРЕНЬЕ
А. Н. БАЛАБУХИ
ВЪ КІЕВѢ.
Фабрика на Подолѣ. Александровская улица, собствен. домъ.
Магазины на Крещатикѣ и на Подолѣ при фабрикѣ.

Sign or flyer for the dry jam business of the Balabukha family. It says the factory is on Alexandrovskaya Street on the Podol in a privately owned house and shops are located on Kreschatik and on the Podol.

Considering the small population of the Podol at the time, Maria probably knew the Balabukha family well. (Photo credit http://kyivweekly.com.ua/style/etno/2010/11/01/164453.html)

Balabukha's Store on Kreschatik Street, right in the heart of the upscale commercial district of Kiev, above the Podol and just below the walled ancient city center of the Princes. About that same time, her future son law, Gregory Britchkin, had his Crystal and Crockery Store on the same street. (source unknown)

As the business grew, Maria purchased land and building and even an orchard. She dealt well with money matters as can be seen by her mortgage and acquisition. From family stories we were told that she never took money as gifts and favors but dealt with all investments in a businesslike manner. After her daughter Lyena's marriage, she took out at least one large loan for the purchase of property from the bank operated by her son in law. The marriage may also have benefitted her with sugar supplies, for one of the sugar companies rented two apartments in the Britchkin building.

Making Dry Jam

The process used to manufacture the dry jam was probably adapted from the East where it had been used for many centuries to preserve fruit and create magnificent sweets for the glittering courts of India. Superbly sweet, the candied fruits sparkled with sugar crystals adding brilliance to the color and enhancing the flavor. The process, however, was labor intensive and involved a number of cooking and cooling steps each of which had to be precisely timed and properly executed.

Balabukha's store selling dry jam on Kreschiatik in Kiev. Balabukha made a fortune in this business and three generations lived in luxury as a result. Maria sold to the family and, according to oral history, they sent her fruits as far as St. Petersburg. (photo credit http://kyivweekly.com.ua/style/etno/2010/11/01/164453.html)

The fruit arrived from the south in the late summer to the river port on the Podol. It was immediately washed and picked through, removing stems, leaves and debris. Then it was quickly run through the first cooking cycle to prevent spoilage. This involved dipping it into a vat of boiling super saturated sugar solution heated to a precise temperature. It was then scooped out and carefully laid out on shelves to cool and harden. At this point the fruit was just cooked enough to prevent spoilage but not yet finished and the process would be repeated several more times later in the fall when the delicate harvests had finished and the weather had cooled. When finally finished, the fruit retained its brilliant color and rich flavor and looked as if it were made of glass.

Each part of the process was carried out in a separate small outbuilding because of the different temperature needs. The partially prepared fruit was cooled on racks away from the heat of the boiling and then stored in a cool clean building carefully arranged on shelves out of reach of insects and vermin until it was boiled again, cooled and packaged for distribution.

Ukraine was specially known for its exquisitely aromatic berries and it is these that Maria converted into the confection.

Helen recalls being told about the process…

1890 print of the wall descending behind the Florovsky Women's Monastery which was behind Maria's house and still stands today. The old Val (or "defensive wall") extends down the hill. (Photo Source: Wikipedia)

> Even though Maria grew her own fruit, she also received some by barge, going herself to the dock to inspect each load as it arrived. Upon delivery, the fruit was sorted and cleaned of leaves and stems. This was done by young girls supervised by older women. They sat at long tables, under a canopy-roof, and were supposed to sing continually to keep their mouths busy to prevent them from eating the fruit. It is unknown how many girls she employed but the reference to supervision would indicate at least 8 or more.

They cooked it several times and each time it went through the stages — boiling in sugar, cooling, and drying. Cleaned fruit was boiled in huge vats of sugar syrup. Depending on the type of product made, some fruit would be cooked and dried several times to get a nice crystalline coating. After each boiling, it was carefully dried in ovens and then cooled on shelves. Partially processed fruit was kept in storage rooms to "finish" in the winter. Some was rolled in crystalized or powdered sugar at the end. Finished fruit was then packed in specially designed decorated small boxes called "bonbonnieres."

There were no artificial colors or flavors added, and it was said to be a most beautiful confection as it did not lose its color or flavor.

The finished product was packed in specially designed decorative boxes called "bonbonnieres" and consigned to Balabukha to ship and sell in upscale markets in Kiev, Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Her business was so successful that she not only managed to purchase several additional properties, but she also sent her boys to university — an expensive proposition in those days. She provided each of her two girls with dowries. Baba Lyena received 20,000 rubles and while we do not know how much her sister Aunt Nadya received, both marriages were contracted with very wealthy men.

According to records found by oldkiev.top Maria purchased the orchard and buildings at #9 Vozdvizhenskaya Lane before 1882.

It is one or two parcels away from the Kresto-Vozdvizhenskaya Church (Exaltation of the Cross) which stands on the corner where the lane and street of that name separate.

This property was located in front of Florovsky Monastery and Bald Mountain. A plan and details can be found below.


№ 2903.

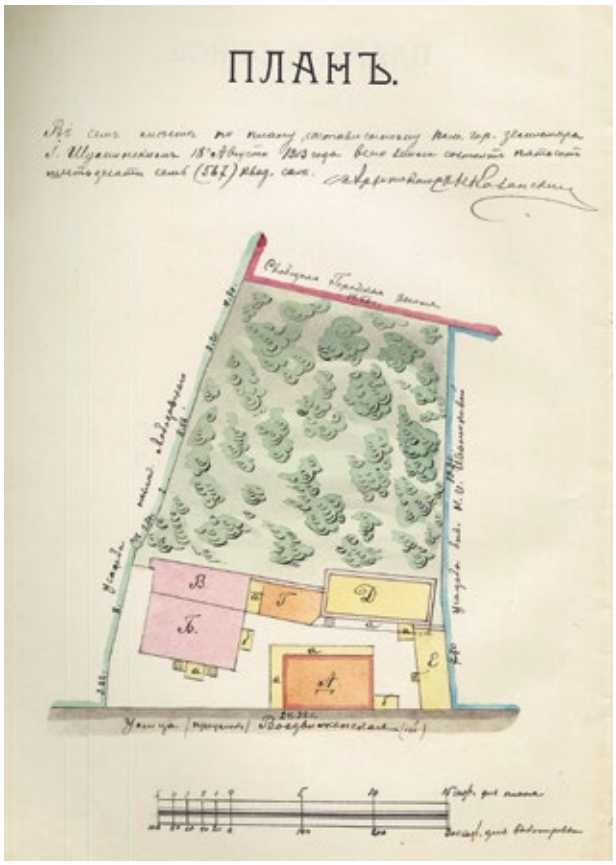
ДѢЛО

КІЕВСКАГО ГОРОДСКАГО

КРЕДИТНАГО ОБЩЕСТВА.

Archival copy of the loan document for Maria's land and buildings which she sold or somehow transferred in 1909 to Bushmakin and Bezrukov who then kept paying the loan until it was cancelled in 1917. The handwritten notes across the front say "cancelled 1917."

Maria originally got the loan from the State Bank where her son in law, Gregory Britchkin, served as director or even had an ownership stake. We do not know why she gave up the land and home and we have no record of her death although we have a last known reference to her made in 1910 when her residence is listed as 30B Mihailovsky Lane, in her daughter Nadya's house located half a block from the Britchkin house. We have more pages from this document from the archive which are not published here. (Archive reference: 3.69 обкладинка 100,оп.1,спр.1629 plans Vosdvigenskaya St.)



Plan of Maria's land at #9 Vozdvizhenskaya Lane (Plan 5-3b) showing buildings Б, В, Г, Д & У which is where she raised her family and processed the dry jam. The church is one lot away on the right of the plan.

Almost all the old houses on the Podol were confiscated again around 1982 and demolished around 1986. They were replaced by modern condos and hotels.

The street plan below shows the location of Marias parcel of land at #9 Vozdvizhenskaya Lane. The Florovsky Women's Monastary stands in the upper left hand corner.

The Vozdvizhenskaya Church marks the corner where the Lane and the Street meet. Her land was situated right in the middle of the business section and very near Kontraktova Polschad, Contract Plaza, which was a main gathering place for merchants since ancient times and the large market active during Maria's lifetime. (Document source: Kiev Archive, Vozdvizhenskaya 100,оп.1,спр.1629 plans)

Either she got a mortgage or she used this property as collateral for a loan from the Kiev's City Credit Union or Organization. On July 2, 1909 the property was transferred to creditors Peter Mikhailovich Bushmakin and Fedor Yakovlevich Bezrukov who then picked up payments on the the loan until it was paid off in 1917. The cancellation document is reproduced below toward the end of this chapter. Either Maria could not or did not want to continue paying off the loan. We don't know who these men were or the circumstances that led her to transfer the property and the loan but we do know she was still alive in 1910 and living with her daughter, Nadya, at 30B Mihailovsky Lane.

The detailed plan of her property, labeled 5-3b, shows a number of small buildings along the lane with the orchard extending toward the hill. From Helen's account it appears she provided room and board for her workers. The whole lot is designated as #9 but there are five buildings on it identified as Б, В, Г, Д & У. The number was applied to the land parcel and then the owner could build however many other buildings he or she wanted to. These were the work spaces where Maria processed her jams.

We can tell the exact location of the property drawn on the Plan because it locates the Florovsky Monastery and Bald Mountain in the back. There are five buildings listed on this property, one of which was the family home and the others, out-buildings for the jam processing. The main building is probably the house where Maria raised her children and where Helen visited with her mother in her youth.

Views of Maria's house before it was taken down in 1982-84. The arrow points to the house itself on #9 Vozdvizhenskaya Lane. Her orchard and processing buildings stood behind the family home.

The family home is the two story house generally in the middle of each of the photos and marked on some by the owner of the photos. (Photo credit: oldkiev.top)

The Florovsky Women's Monastery

Butting up against Castle Hill (also known as Mussorsky's "Bald Mountain") this women's monastery stood behind Maria Mihailenko's orchard.

The Florovsky Women's Monastery, technically known as the "Ascension Monastery" dates back to 16th century and was founded in honor of two martyred early Christian Byzantine brothers, Sts. Florian and Laurus.

The story goes that long in the past these two Saints, who were stonemasons, were ordered to build a pagan temple but they designed it as Christian church instead. As punishment for their disobedience, they were buried alive in a well but saved by the Archangel Michael who restored them and their horse but not before teaching them to train and care for the beasts. Thus, they became the patrons of horses.

The Florovsky Women's Monastery, technically known as the "Ascension Monastery" dates back to 16th century and was founded in honor of two martyred early Christian Byzantine brothers, Sts. Florian and Laurus. (Photo source: hram-nikolai.kiev.ua)

In 1711, not long before our ancestor, Efim Nalivaiko, was born the Abbess of the monastery happened to be the mother of the Zaporozian Cossack Hetman Ivan Mazepa. She bequeathed part of the land upon which the monastery still stands today.

Maria's property on #9 Vozdvizhenskaya Street is also listed on the chart below from the website oldkiev.top. It is listed as #15 but then in 1898 the numbers were changed and hers became #9.

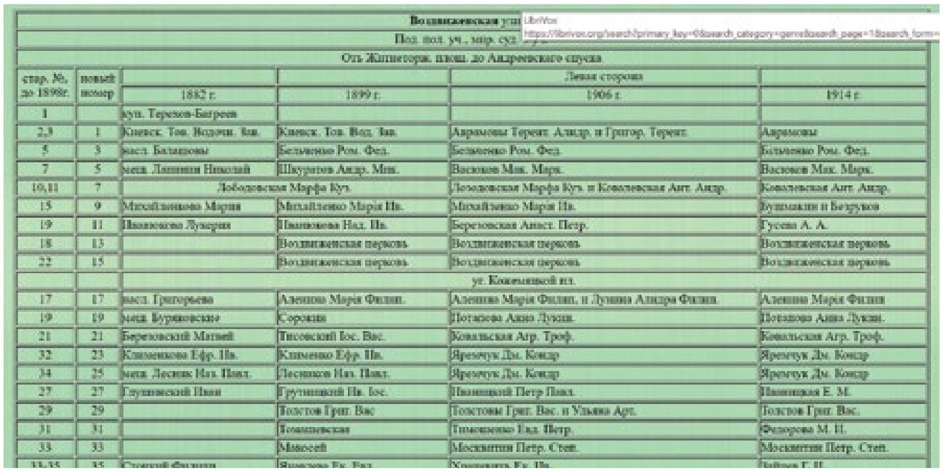
This house (photographed in March 2017) was almost certainly the neighbor to Maria on the SW side on Vozdvizhenskaya Lane. On our right and slightly off the picture stands the Kresto Vozdvizhenskaya Church.

Maria's land and house were probably located in the space between this building and the Yellow new one on the left side of this photo. This location matches the plan of her garden and house below.

Castle Hill (also known as Bald Mountain) looms behind the house. Maria's garden stood between the street and that mountain. (Photo Credit: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=35571688 — in this link the street still bears its Soviet name.

List of property owners including Marias from the website oldkiev.top. This shows that Maria owned a property numbered 15 from 1882. In 1898 the number was changed to #9 and then the mortgage was transferred to new owners in 1909.

This is the property in front of the Florovsky Monastery which is shown on the plan and to which the loan documents refer. (Source: Oldkiev.top)



Воздвиженская ули[...] LibriVox https://librivox.org/search?primary_key=0&search_category=genre&search_page=1&search_form=

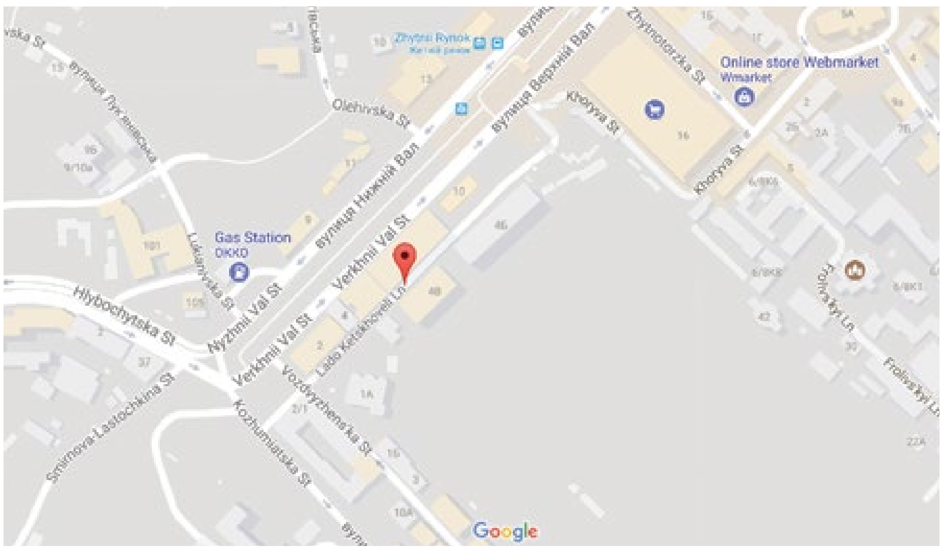
Под. пол. уч., мир. суд. [...]

Отъ Житнеторж. площ. до Андреевского спуска

стар. №. до 1898г.	новый номер	1882 г.	1899 г.	Левая сторона 1906 г.	1914 г.
1		куп. Терехов-Багреев			
2,3	1	Киевск. Тов. Водочн. Зав.	Киевск. Тов. Вод. Зав.	Авраамовы Терент. Алкдр. и Григор. Терент.	Авраамовы
5	3	насл. Балашовы	Бельченко Ром. Фед.	Бельченко Ром. Фед.	Бельченко Ром. Фед.
7	5	мещ. Лапшин Николай	Шкуратов Алкдр. Мих.	Васюков Мак. Марк.	Васюков Мак. Марк.
10,11	7	Лободовская Марфа Куз.		Лободовская Марфа Куз. и Ковалевская Ант. Алкдр.	Ковалевская Ант. Алкдр.
15	9	Михайленкова Мария	Михайленко Марія Ив.	Михайленко Марія Ив.	Бушмакин и Безруков
19	11	Ивашкова Лукерия	Ивашкова Над. Ив.	Березовская Анаст. Петр.	Гусева А. А.
18	13		Воздвиженская церковь	Воздвиженская церковь	Воздвиженская церковь
22	15		Воздвиженская церковь	Воздвиженская церковь	Воздвиженская церковь
		ут. Кожемяцкой ул.			
17	17	насл. Григорьевы	Алешина Марія Филип.	Алешина Марія Филип. и Лушина Алкдра Филип.	Алешина Марія Филип.
19	19	мещ. Буряковские	Сорокин	Потапова Анна Лукин.	Потапова Анна Лукин.
21	21	Березовский Матвей	Тисовский Іос. Вас.	Ковальская Агр. Троф.	Ковальская Агр. Троф.
32	23	Клименкова Ефр. Ив.	Клименко Ефр. Ив.	Яремчук Дм. Кондр.	Яремчук Дм. Кондр.
34	25	мещ. Лесник Наз. Павл.	Лесников Наз. Павл.	Яремчук Дм. Кондр.	Яремчук Дм. Кондр.
27	27	Глушинский Иван	Глушицкий Ив. Іос.	Ивницкий Петр Павл.	Ивницкая Е. М.
29	29		Толстов Григ. Вас.	Толстовы Григ. Вас. и Ульяна Арт.	Толстов Григ. Вас.
31	31		Томашевская	Тимошенко Евд. Петр.	Федорова М. П.
33	33		Мокосей	Москвитин Петр. Степ.	Москвитин Петр. Степ.
33-35	35	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Google maps showing the location of Maria's property on Vozdvizhenska Lane. The street on this 2019 map still bears its Soviet name. The church stands on the corner.

In 2019, there was still a house on that lot labeled #4b. The Florovsky Monastery still exists to this day. (Source: Google Maps)



Sagaidachni Street (formerly Alexandrovskaya #89-91) view with the Kresto-Vozdvizhenskaya Church at the bottom right. Balabukha also had a house on this street and we have a record of Maria renting an apartment or perhaps a business space also on this street at #35. (Photo from the starkiev.com)

The house where Maria rented an apartment for some time on Sagaidachnovo Street #35 (current name) photographed in 1870. It is now called Alexandrovskaya Street and the house numbers are 89-91.

One record in the archive noted that Maria had her business here in 1888. She also is recorded as renting an apartment in this building. (Photo from the Kiev Archive)

The house where Maria rented an apartment for some time on Sagaidachnovo Street #35 (current name) photographed in 1870. It is now called Alexandrovskaya Street and the house numbers are 89-91.

One record in the archive noted that Maria had her business here in 1888. She also is recorded as renting an apartment in this building. (Photo from the Kiev Archive)

Kovalinsky also found references to Maria owning or renting other properties. At one point, she is listed as owning or renting a property at Alexandrovsky St. #97 (today Sayadachnogo # 35). One record in the archive noted that she had her business here in 1888.

In the late 1980's much of the Podol was confiscated (for a second time — the first being the Revolution) to clear the way for high end "development" of hotels and condos. Before the old buildings were razed a photographer managed to get excellent black and white photos which are now in the archives and available online at oldkiev.top which owns the rights to these photos.

A view of the neighborhood near Maria's house and orchard along Vozdvizhenskaya Street, just around the corner from the church. The numbers of these houses are # 7, 9 and 11 in the archive but these buildings are on the "street" and not the "lane" by that name. (Photo credit: oldkiev.top)

Helen Visits Her Great Grandmother's Buildings

During the Soviet period it was dangerous to speak of Maria but one when Helen was in her teens, her mother, Anna, took her to see where her great-grandmother Maria's house and factory had been. These were probably the buildings drawn on the plan behind the main house. Helen remembered it was near Goncharnaya Street which does connect to Vozdvizhenskaya.

Helen remembered…

> The buildings were still there, the crooked little street was still there, as was the cozy home. There was something very alive, very attractive, in the whole group of buildings. Was it the spirit, the reflection of people who lived there? When I was looking at the houses and asking questions of my mother, I knew I had to be careful because my great-grandmother had been labeled by the Soviets as a "capitalist exploiter" and therefore an enemy of the people. In those days we knew how to keep our mouths shut."

Maria's Misadventure and Disappearance

According to Helen…

> Maria had one interesting business misadventure. After she retired and was living very comfortably, her friend, also a merchant of good reputation and wealth, needed a considerable sum of money quickly as he was going to the fair in Nizhni Novgorod. That was a yearly event where all big business was done. She gave him the money (without a note, as was the custom in those days) but he dropped dead at the fair. She lost a large sum. However, when her son-in-law Gregory Britchkin offered to help her financially, she refused politely but firmly. She always paid off her debts and preferred to remain independent.

Maria's daughter, Nadya, married Ivan Ivanyuk in an arranged marriage. He owned a house on the Podol a few doors away from Maria's house as documented in records retrieved by oldkiev.top. This house in the photo is listed as belonging to Nadya Mihailenko and it is possible she inherited it from her husband who died shortly after the wedding.

Later, she lived at 30B Mihailovsky Pereulok a block away from the home of her sister, our great grandmother Baba Lyena. In 1910 her mother Maria is listed as living here with her daughter.

What happened to Maria during the Revolution? We do not know. The records in http://oldkiev.top show that she sold (or lost to creditors) her building on #9 Vozdvizhenskaya Street in 1909. The archival material found by Kovalinsky reports her living with her older daughter Nadya in the house on 30B Mikhailovsky Lane in 1910. Nadya lived only one block away from her sister Baba Lyena and the Britchkin apartment building and this was something that Helen also was told.

In 1995 the house at 30B Mikhailovsky Lane was still there but was in a dilapidated state. The door was nailed shut and the inside had collapsed. In 2014, Kathy returned and could not find the house at all.

That is the last record we have of Maria. It is possible that the social upheaval following the 1905 revolution resulted in Maria's losing her land and her home. It is also possible that she transferred ownership because she had become too old to run the business or the business no longer brought in enough to make it worthwhile. It was a very labor intensive endeavor and required timing and physical stamina. We do not know the year of her death and have found no further mention of her in any of the records we have located.

CHAPTER 6

Ivan Savelevich Mihailenko (b. 1842–d. 1878) (Helen's Grandfather)

Ivan Savelevich Mihailenko was Baba Lyena's father and his goes back about two centuries to the Ukrainian Cossacks.

Helen had a picture in her mind of what a "Cossack"must look like for one day while explaining photos to her daughter Kathy, she looked at the picture of Ivan and Maria, paused and said she could not remember which of the two descended from the Cossack Hetman Nalivaiko. Then, suddenly inspired, she pointed to Ivan's face and said, "That's a classic Cossack face!" Of course, she was right. She did not explain what led to her conclusion but apparently, she was referring to Ivan's delicate patrician facial features which she considered "Western" or Polish. Many Cossacks in the past were indeed Polish.

Until Kovalinsky dug for records in the newly opened Kiev archives, all we knew of our ancestor was his name and the photo from the miniature in which he is depicted with his wife. Thanks to archival research, we can trace Ivan's ancestry three generations back through his mother.

Ivan's parents were Savelei Mihailenko (b. ca. 1820 — d. 1858) and Stefanida Nalivaiko (b. 13 November 1824 — d. October 16, 1869).

Ivan Mihailenko's mother Stefanida Nalivaiko, was a a descendant of the Polish Cossack family tracing its lineage back to the well known Hetman Severin Nalivaiko. Helen always knew that her grandmother was connected to the Nalivaiko family line but only in vague terms. Whenever she mentioned that her grandmother's maiden name was "Mihailenko" people would nob sagely and say, "Ah yes Mihailenko and Nalivaiko. That is the union!" Kovalinsky found the proof.

Both of Ivan's parents belonged to a class of settled Cossacks who had become civil servants and merchants after 1764 when Catherine II destroyed the Zaporozhian Cossack stronghold on Khortitsa Island in the Dnieper and demolished their villages. They had just helped her win large pieces of territory in the south from the Turks and she feared their independence and their mercenary ways. They held no political allegiance sacred but went to fight for the highest bidder and she feared they could as easily turn on Russia as they had on the Turks.

The defeated surviving Cossacks were then resettled in Kiev and given token jobs in the civil service as clerks and functionaries. The more enterprising established businesses or worked in the trades.

The Cossacks had been a major force in Ukraine from the 16th century onward in Ukraine. In the 17th century they established an independent state governed by an elected Hetman. In 1764, Catherine II, fearing their power, abolished the Hetmanate (by destroying their Sich) and imposed Russian control over the previously independent lands of Ukraine. Within the Hetmanate, the Cossacks had become a class under the nobles and this status persisted even as they settled down in the cities.

Commemorative stamp honoring Hetman Severin Nalivaiko, Polish Cossack leader who led an uprising against the Poles and, in 1596, died a rather gruesome death at hands of his own men along the Dnieper River south of Kiev.

The Nalivaikos and probably also the Mihailenkos retained a continued Cossack identity, although they abandoned their military occupations for trade and civil service. Thus, Ivan was born into the urbanized Cossack class and worked as a clerk or civil servant in the Tsar's service. The position was prestigious but came with little pay.

According to oral histories, the Nalivaikos were all related to or descended from the legendary Hetman, Severin Nalivaiko, who in 1599 led an ill-fated rebellion against the Poles in 1599 in an early attempt to establish a Ukrainian state. It was said that the Nalivaiko-Mihailenko marriage, which took place in the 19th century, united two prominent Kievan Cossack families.

The link from Ivan, Helen's grandfather, back to the Hetman is unclear although everyone in Ukraine connects the name "Nalivaiko" with this Cossack. Considered a dangerous rebel for years, Nalivaiko was elevated to a hero after Ukraine's independence and in 2011, a commemorative stamp was issued in his honor.

Hetman Severin Nalivaiko

A painting of Severin Nalivaiko in the Cossack Museum on Khortitsa Island (Photo taken by the authors).

Hetman Severin Nalivaiko (1560-1597) led a failed Cossack rebellion against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth called "the Nailivaiko Uprising."

In 1597, the Polish army surrounded the Cossacks on the Dneiper and said if they surrender their Hetman, the host (fighting unit) would be free to leave.

The host gave him up and Nailivaiko was taken in a cage to Warsaw, where he was quartered. (This was actually the least terrible of the stories surrounding his manner of death!).

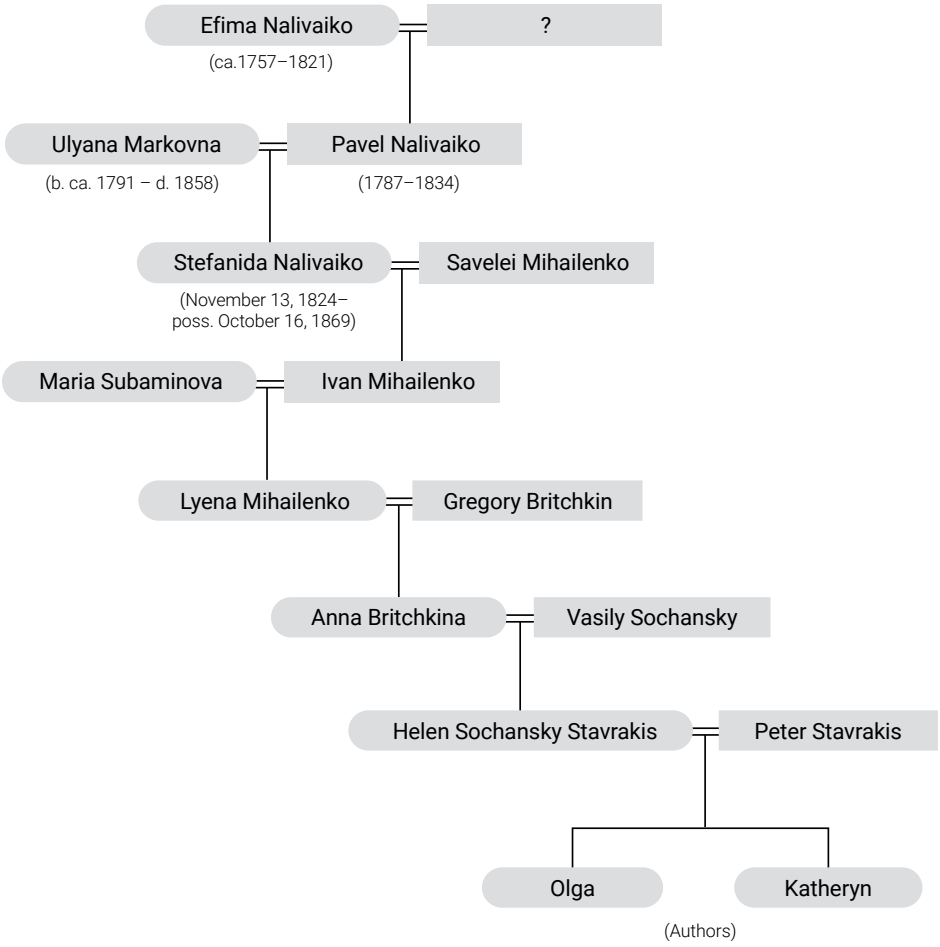
All his men were slaughtered by the Poles anyway.

Nalivaiko remains a Ukrainian folk hero in the struggle for independence. His biography can be found in all the Ukrainian history books. In 2011, Ukraine issued a commemorative stamp in his honor.

Statuette supposedly of Ataman (Hetman) Severin Nalivaiko in his full Cossack regalia and head shaved except for one tuft. Historically Severin probably did not look half so brutal for he was a gently raised Polish nobleman. But Cossacks have a reputation to uphold and they are romantic warrior heroes that inspire the imagination. The men, in particular, stood out for their brilliant colorful costumes and their magnificently ferocious props. (Photo credit: Legendarion on Etsy)

Even in the US, when our mother met someone from Kiev or from the vicinity of the village of Nichiporovka, and she told them her grandmother's name, they would nod their heads knowingly and say, "Ah yes, Mihailenko and Nalivaiko. That is the union."

The Nalivaiko line as we know it today, without side branches that are sometimes mentioned is as follows:

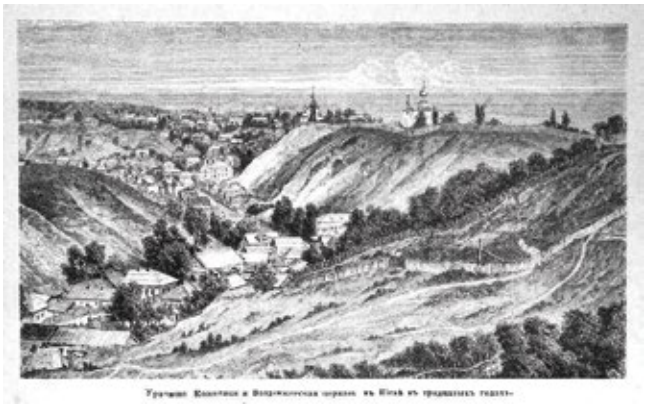


Ivan's Mother, Stefanida Nalivaiko (November 13, 1824–poss. October 16, 1869)

The dates documenting Stefanida Nalivaiko's birth and that of her children seem to have some

errors in them. Her birth in the notarized archival record is given as the 13th of November 1834 which cannot be correct as her two surviving brothers were born in 1819 and 1822 and her first recorded child was born in 1841.

Thus, adjusting for these errors by guestimates she was probably born on the 13th of November, 1824 (instead of "1834"). She had two brothers; Emilian, who survived only a year, was born in 1819 and a second brother, Nazar, born in 1822.



Woodcut of Podol in 1830 at the time Stefanida Nalivaiko was born. This is a view of the leatherworkers area with Vozdvizhenskaya Street in 1830. Stefanida, Ivan's grandmother, owned several properties here and this is where her children lived all their lives. (photo credit: Kiev Archive)

The date of her death is also uncertain as it is unclear if she died on October 16, 1869 or is she was alive on that date and doing business.

She married Savelei Mihailenko around 1841 and they had three known surviving children born 1842 (Ivan) and 1851 (Feodor) and Paraskeva, whose birth date was probably 1844. Her name is sometime recorded as "Pelagia" and it is possible that either there was another child or children who died in between 1844 and 1851. The large gaps often indicate children lost in infancy.

Ivan's father, Savelei Mihailenko belonged to Merchant Guild #2. He was probably born around 1820 (or somewhat earlier) and we know he died in 1858. Both he and his wife were born only about 50 years after Catherine II had disbanded the Hetmanate State (1764) and destroyed the Zaporozhian Cossacks.

Cossacks

From Medieval times, Cossacks were an integral part of Ukrainian history, lore, music, dance and horsemanship. Made up of runaway serfs, peasants, and vagabonds, their communities were organized around the male military "Hosts" and female run agricultural villages.

Painting by Ilya Repin (1844-1930) "Zaporozhian Cossacks write to the Sultan of Turkey." A print of this painting always hung on the authors' grandmother's (Anna Sochanskaya's) bedroom wall. (Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

The hosts served as mercenaries selling their services to various monarchs with a special (although neither constant nor reliable) to the Russian tsars. They often ignored politics and went strictly for booty.

The males lived and trained in a fortified camp called "sich." They were fiercely independent, democratic (among males), recklessly in battle and loyal to each other.

The most active hosts were located on the Ukrainian Steppe, along the fringes of the Russian Empire and even Persia.

Because of their fluid loyalty, and great military skills, the Russian tsars tried to bring them under their control. In 1764, Catherine II succeeded in abolishing the Hetmanate in Ukraine and the Cossacks were eventually incorporated into the emerging westernized Russian society with jobs in the tsar's civil service. The hosts were converted to imperial military units.

Ivan's parents, Stefanida and Savelei, were native to the Podol where they engaged in business, although we do not know its exact nature. From the archival records, we know they owned several properties which changed hands during Stefanida's life and as part of an estate upon her death.

Like his son Ivan after him, Savelei Mihailenko died in 1858 leaving Stefanida a widow who had to fend for herself and provide for her children. If we have his birth date correctly estimated, he was four years older than Stefanida, and 38 years old at the time of his death.

This seems to be a pattern within the family for his son, Ivan, died at age 36, leaving Maria in the same predicament. Several generations later, Olga's husband died at age 38 as well leaving her with two children.

Stefanida went on to succeed admirably in business, for records in the city archives at her death, eleven years after that of her husband, identify her as member of the Merchants 2nd Guild in her own right.

She also made a number of business transactions in her own name, some of which also predate her widowhood. When her son Ivan was only 10 years old (1852) she bought a wooden house built on a stone foundation on Vozdvizhenskaya Street for 2,000 rubles and assigned its ownership to herself together with her newborn second son, Fyodor (data from the Kiev Archive collected by Vitaly Kovalinsky).

This is somewhat unusual, for child mortality at the time was around 50% people did not normally purchase property in the name of a newborn whose fate for the first five years remained uncertain. This act hints at some kind of compelling necessity for it was definitely a risk. Perhaps Savelei was already ailing in 1852 and she feared for her newborn child. Or, was her husband unreliable, a drunkard, perhaps? It is also possible he was a dependable man who helped his wife plan ahead. We just do not know.

Stefanida had also inherited a half share of a house and surrounding land with some kind of "orchard" or "garden" from her own mother, Ulyana Markovna. The other half went to her daughter, Ivan's sister, Pelagia.

We do not know to whom Stefanida left her share of the house upon her own death, but it is likely she willed it to Ivan, which would have left each of her three children with a property. Fyodor, the younger son who had survived the dangers of infancy, owned the house that Stefanida had purchased in both their names in the year of his birth. Pelagia, their sister, had half the share of her grandmother's property. It would make sense if Stefanida left her half of the house she owned together with Pelagia to Ivan. The records show that he bought out his sister's share of that house and land on October 16, 1869. We do not know Stefanida's date of death, but we know that she was alive in 1869 because she is listed in the land purchase records that year and described as a member of Merchant Guild #2.

These land ownership records show that the family was heavily invested on the Podol and had every intention of remaining there into the future. They also tell us that women owned property in their own right and could buy and sell without the

formal consent of any male relative. This is quite progressive considering that in Western Europe and the US at that time property belonging to women was under the total control of husbands, fathers, or male relations.

Our information is also incomplete and it is possible that these properties for which we have records represent only a portion of the assets these families controlled.

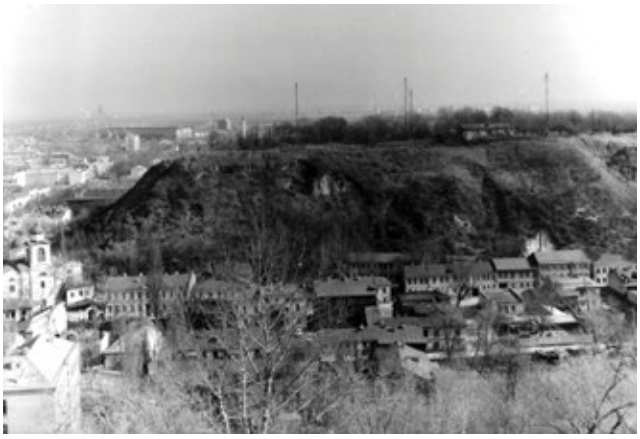
In 1874 Stefanida's younger son, Fyodor, and his wife bought a house nearby on the Podol on Dehtiarna ("Tar" or "Pitch") Street #15 in the land tract called "Kozhemyaki" ("leatherworkers").

In 1878, when Stefanida's older son Ivan died young, leaving his wife Maria a widow, Stefanida helped her daughter-in-law start the dry jam business. The nature of this assistance was never specified, but she owned a house and garden and could have sold fruit for her confections, and even lent money to Maria to get her business started. Both these women seem to have handled investments and assets with considerable skill and ultimate success.

Stefanida's parents Pavel Nalivaiko (b. 1787 – d. 1834) and Ulyana Markovna (b. ca. 1791 – d. 1858)

Stefanida Nalivaiko was one of three known children born to Pavel Nalivaiko and Ulyana Markovna — two boys and a girl. One child, Emilian, born in 1819, only lived one year. Nazar was born in 1822 and our own, Stefanida, in 1824.

In the archives, Ulyana figures more prominently than her husband Pavel even though her parentage is unknown. All we know of Pavel's ancestry is that his father was Efima Nalivaiko. His mother remains unknown.



View of the Podol probably around the end of the 19th century when Stefanida was living here. The Kresto-Vozdvizhenskaya Church can be seen in the lower left hand corner. (photo credit: Kiev Archives)

Pavel (b. 1787), died of Tuberculosis in 1834 at the age of 47 leaving his wife Ulyana a middle aged window who then had to fend for herself although her children would have been in their twenties by then.

At the time of Pavel's death, the family resided on the very same Vozdvizhenskaya Street on the Podol where they would remain for generations, and Ulyana continued to live in the same home until her own death in 1858 when she bequeathed her house jointly to her daughter Stefanida and to Stefanida's daughter, Pelagia. It seems to have been customary to leave property to daughters and we have records of this occurring a number of times on different sides of the family in the 19th century.

Pavel Nalivaiko's parents: Efima Nalivaiko (1757–1821)

Pavel Nalivaiko's father was Efima Nalivaiko, but we do not know the name of his mother. All we have left of this generation is the one name and a few dates. We do know that Efima Nalivaiko and his wife had at least two children, Pavel himself and a daughter named Stefanida (b. 1805), who married Kuzim Nestoravich Timchenko on November 6, 1821 at the age of 16. Timchenko was 30 at the time, born in 1791, and belonged to the Meschane class (the small business class) which is distinct and below the rank of Merchant Guild #2. The rank of each class was determined by the total value of assets and property the family owned.

According to archival records, Efima was 48 years old when his daughter was born in 1805 and Christened in the Pritisko-Nikolskoi Church, which means his year of birth was 1757.

Women in the old Russian Empire tended to have children early in life and ended child-bearing (or, perhaps sexual relations) by about age 35. Based on these norms, Efima's wife was probably about 25 years younger than he was which would put her birth around 1780. The disparity in the ages between bride and groom suggests that there may have been property involved and that the marriage was arranged.

This is as far back as our record of goes to date, although the archives contain considerable information and, in time, more research will no doubt extend the family further back and fill in some of the gaps.

Building also numbered #5-в Vozdvizhenskaya Street. Kovalinsky thought it might have belonged to someone in the family but that is uncertain. Still, it certainly belonged to neighbors they knew. The building is in a different style from the typical Podol houses but the address is correct as it was carefully labelled. (Photo Credit: Oldkiev.top).

Annexes

ANNEX 1

List of Organizations (in Russian) to which Britchkin Belonged in 1915 (from Kiev Archive retrieved by Kovalinsky)

Г. И. Брычкин по справочнику «Весь Киев на 1915 год»:

- член Совета Киевского Свято-Владимирского братства ревнителей православия

- **потомственный почетный гражданин**

- церковный староста Софийского собора с 10 июня 1891 г.

- гласный городской думы с 1901 г.

- член городской финансовой комиссии

- член общей мостовой комиссии

- член от города в Киевской комиссии торговли и мануфактур

- представитель киевского городского общественного управления в Комитете больницы цесаревича Николая для чернорабочих

- товарищ (заместитель) председателя Киевского русского купеческого собрания

- член Совета старшин Собрания домовладельцев города Киева

- член учетно-ссудного комитета Киевской конторы Госбанка по торгово-промышленным кредитам с 1894 г.

- председатель Киевского Русского торгово-промышленного общества взаимного кредита

ANNEX 2
1917 City Census

1917 Kiev City census, listing all the residents in the apartments on 11/12 Malopodvalnaya Street, in Britchkin's building, constructed sometime around the turn of the century.

The family had a 10 room apartment on the second floor just above the main entrance, called the "Blue Door." There were 10 people residing there: Gregory and Lyena Britchkin, their sons Nicolai and Ivan, Anna and Vasily, at least one made and/or a cook. They also rented one room to a boarder.

Two large apartments were rented to the Sugar Beet Association. Smaller one room apartments were rented to professionals. All apartments were equipped with electricity and running water.

СВѢДѢНІЯ ПРЕДСТАВЛЯЕМЫЯ ДОМОВЛАДѢЛЬЦАМИ И

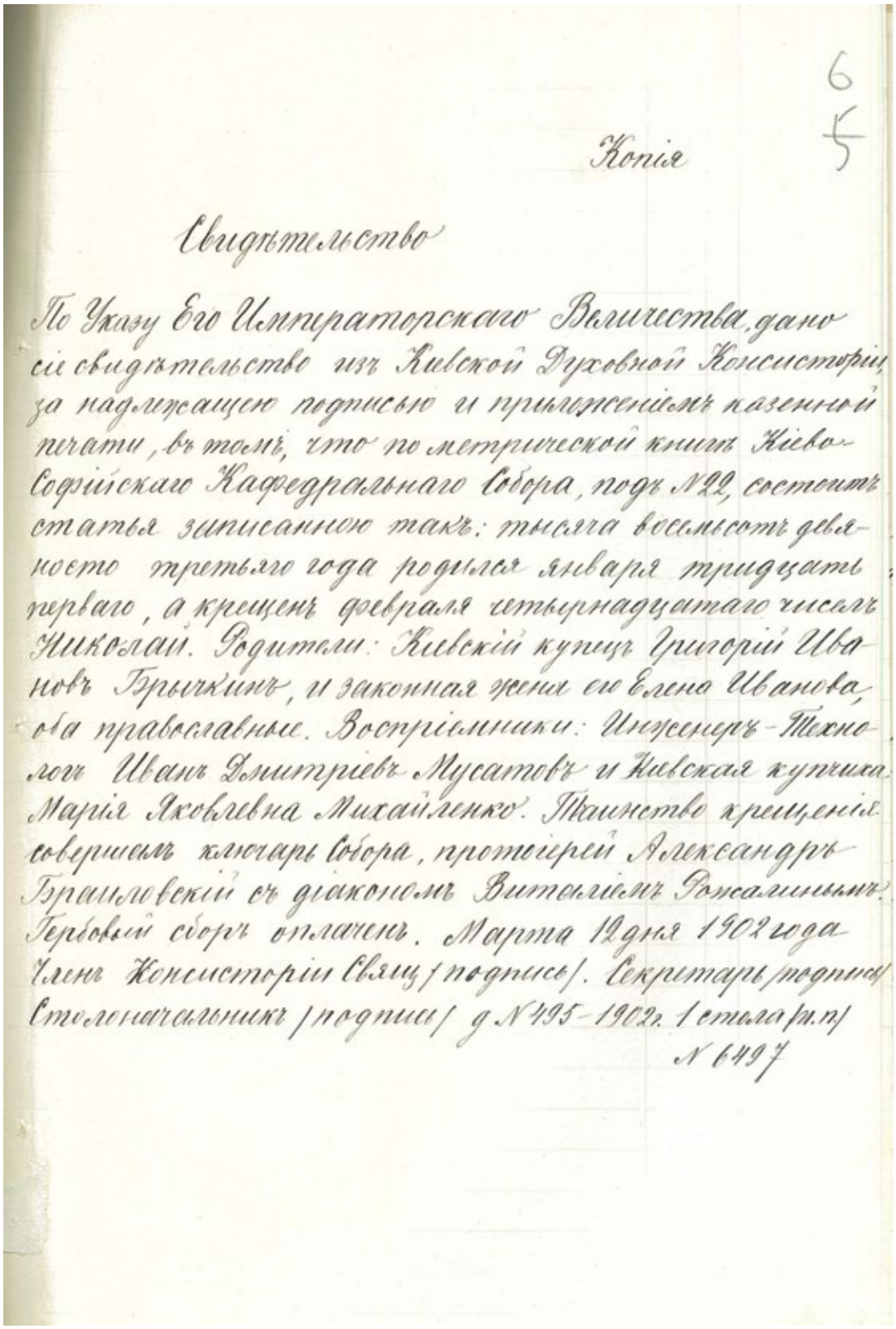
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Мольская Ольга Михайловна помещица	10	2	1	2	–	–	14	3
2-4	Контора Бобровиц. Главн. сахар. завод.	16	4	2	3			25	2
3	Землеустроит. Комиссія	10	2	1	1			8	3
5	Константинова Елена Петровна	5	1	1	–	2	–	10	1
6	Потто Александр Львович помещица	8	1	1	1	–	–	8	3
7	Брычкинъ Григорій Ивановичъ домовлад.	8	1	1	1	2	–	10	2
8	Чернявскій Ал... Семеновичъ служба	2/	1	1	–	–	–	3	1
9	Бѣлоплатовъ Вас. Ивановичъ служба	5	1	1		3		7	1
10	Уманова Ольга Ермолаевна чиновница	5	1	1				4	1
11	Якимовичъ Марія Петровна служба	2/	2	1		1		5	1
12	Горачевъ Михайловъ [illegible] служба	4	1	1				8	полупод.
13	Старосельскій Андрей Андр. подполковн.	2	1	1				4	1
14	Степановъ Николай Александров. служба	3	1	1				6	3
15	Свѣнцицкій Николай Эдуардовичъ техникъ	3	1	1				4	1
16	Грищковъ Игнатій Николаевичъ поваръ	1						1	подв.
17	Дворницкая	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	1

Примѣчаніе 1. Если квартира сдана съ мебелью либо съ отопленіемъ, то проставлен въ графѣ 1[illegible] цѣну за мебель и за отоплен[illegible] указать опредѣлена ли эта цѣна на основаніи письменнаго договора или же установлена по усмотрѣнію подателя сего опрс[illegible]

Примѣчаніе 2. На основаніи ст. 52 Положенія о гор. дох. за недоставленіе свѣдѣній, перечисленныхъ въ настоящемъ опросно[illegible] установленному сроку 7-го Января, домовладѣльцы или ихъ замѣстители подвергаются денежному взысканію въ ра[illegible] рублей. Если же ими будутъ доставлены Городской Управѣ заведомо невѣрныя свѣдѣнія, то они подвергаются де[illegible] сканію до трехсотъ рублей.

ANNEX 3

Nicolai Grigorievich Britchkin's School Records



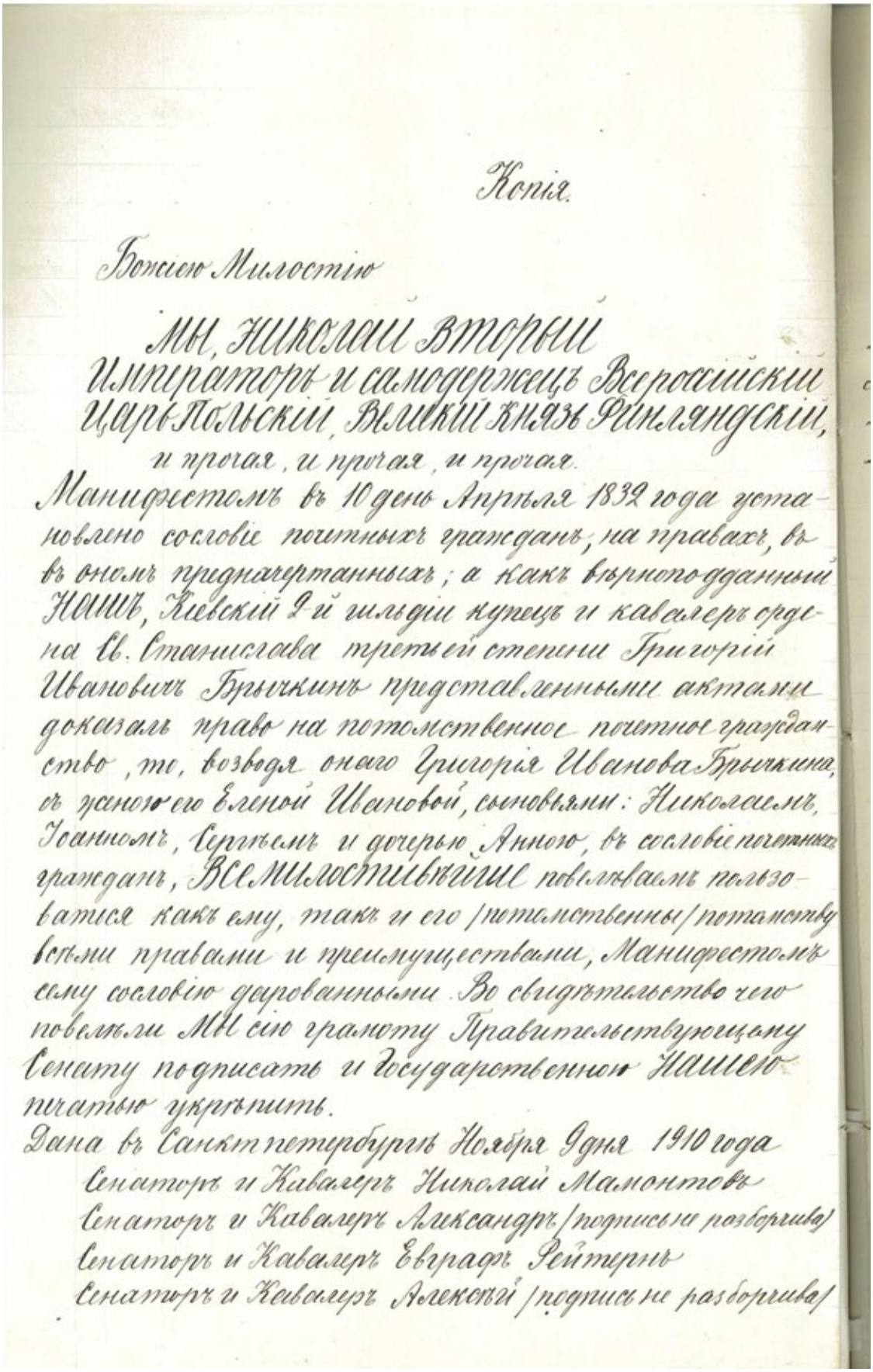
6
5

Копія

Свидѣтельство

По Указу Его Императорскаго Величества, дано сіе свидѣтельство изъ Кіевской Духовной Консисторіи, за надлежащею подписью и приложеніемъ казенной печати, въ томъ, что по метрической книгѣ Кіево-Софійскаго Каѳедральнаго Собора, подъ №22, состоитъ статья записанною такъ: тысяча восемьсотъ девяносто третьяго года родился января тридцать перваго, а крещенъ февраля четырнадцатаго числа Николай. Родители: Кіевскій купецъ Григорій Ивановъ Брычкинъ, и законная жена его Елена Иванова, оба православные. Воспріемники: Инженеръ-Технологъ Иванъ Дмитріевъ Мусатовъ и Кіевская купчиха Марія Яковлевна Михайленко. Таинство крещенія совершилъ ключарь Собора, протоіерей Александръ Граціановскій съ діакономъ Виталіемъ Рождественскимъ. Гербовый сборъ оплаченъ. Марта 12 дня 1902 года. Члены Консисторіи Свящ./подпись/. Секретарь/подпись/ Столоначальникъ/подпись/ д.№495-1902г. 1 стола/м.п./

№ 6497



Копія.

Божією Милостію

МЫ, НИКОЛАЙ ВТОРЫЙ
Императоръ и самодержецъ Всероссійскій
Царь Польскій, Великій князь Финляндскій,
и прочая, и прочая, и прочая.

Манифестомъ въ 10 день Апрѣля 1832 года установлено сословіе почетныхъ гражданъ, на правахъ, въ немъ предначертанныхъ; а какъ вѣрноподданный НАШЪ, Кіевскій 2-й гильдіи купецъ и кавалеръ ордена Св. Станислава третьей степени Григорій Ивановичъ Брычкинъ представленными актами доказалъ право на потомственное почетное гражданство, то, возводя онаго Григорія Иванова Брычкина, съ женою его Еленой Ивановой, сыновьями: Николаемъ, Іоанномъ, Сергѣемъ и дочерью Анною, въ сословіе почетныхъ гражданъ, ВСЕМИЛОСТИВѢЙШЕ повелѣваемъ пользоваться какъ ему, такъ и его /потомственны/ потомству всѣми правами и преимуществами, Манифестомъ сему сословію дарованными. Во свидѣтельство чего повелѣли МЫ сію грамоту Правительствующему Сенату подписать и Государственною НАШЕЮ печатью укрѣпить.

Дана въ Санктпетербургѣ Ноября 9 дня 1910 года

Сенаторъ и Кавалеръ Николай Мамонтовъ
Сенаторъ и Кавалеръ Александръ /подпись разборчива/
Сенаторъ и Кавалеръ Евграфъ Рейтернъ
Сенаторъ и Кавалеръ Алексѣевъ /подпись не разборчива/

Копія 5/4

Свидѣтельство

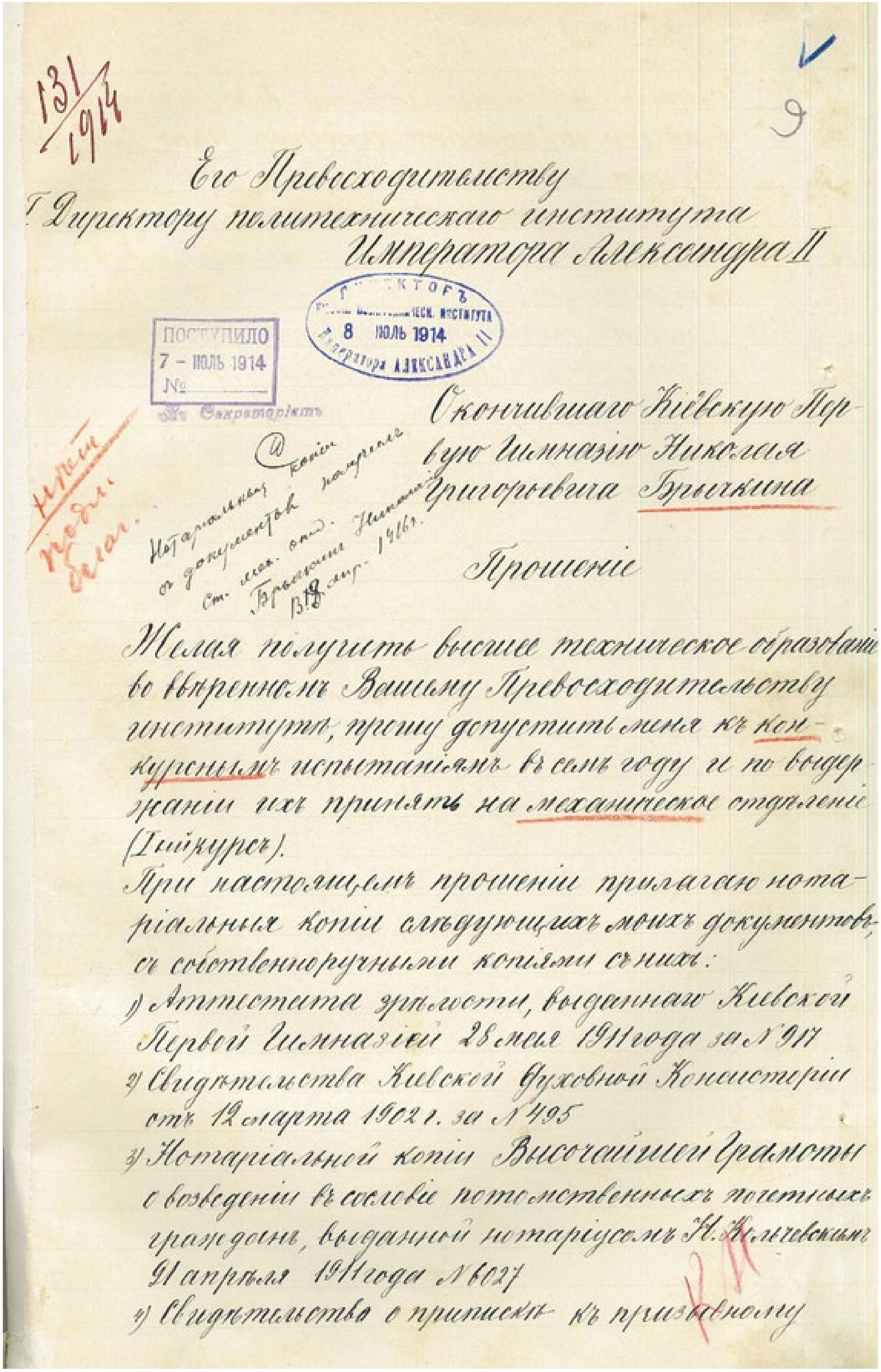
о приписке къ призывному участку

Брычкинъ Николай Григорьевичъ, сынъ потомств. почетн. гражданина, родившійся тридцать перваго января тысяча восемьсотъ девяносто третьяго года, приписанъ по отбыванію воинской повинности къ Кивскому городскому призывному участку
Вѣроисповѣданія православнаго
Ученикъ VIII класса Кіевской 1-й гимназіи
Удостовѣреніе 21 января 1911 г. № 164
Вышепоименованный Николай Брычкинъ подлежащій исполненію воинской повинности въ тысяча девятьсот четырнадцатомъ году, обязуется доставить въ Кіевское городское по воинской повинности присутствіе не позже перваго Марта означеннаго года (1914) свѣдѣній о семейномъ его состояніи, согласно Высочайшему повелѣнію 23 Іюля 1874 г. (см на оборотѣ)
Выдано Кіевскимъ городскимъ по воинской повинности присутствіемъ 1911 года Марта 4 дня
за № 1256

Предсѣдатель Присутствія (подпись не разобрана)

(м. п.)

Дѣлопроизводитель Артемовскій



131/1914

Его Превосходительству
Г. Директору политехническаго института
Императора Александра II

ДИРЕКТОРЪ Кiевск. Политехническ. Института 8 ІЮЛЬ 1914 Императора АЛЕКСАНДРА II

ПОСТУПИЛО
7 – ІЮЛЬ 1914
№ ______
Въ Секретарiатъ

Нотарiальныя копiи съ документовъ направл. Ст. мех. отд. Николаю Брычкину 19 апр. 1916 г.

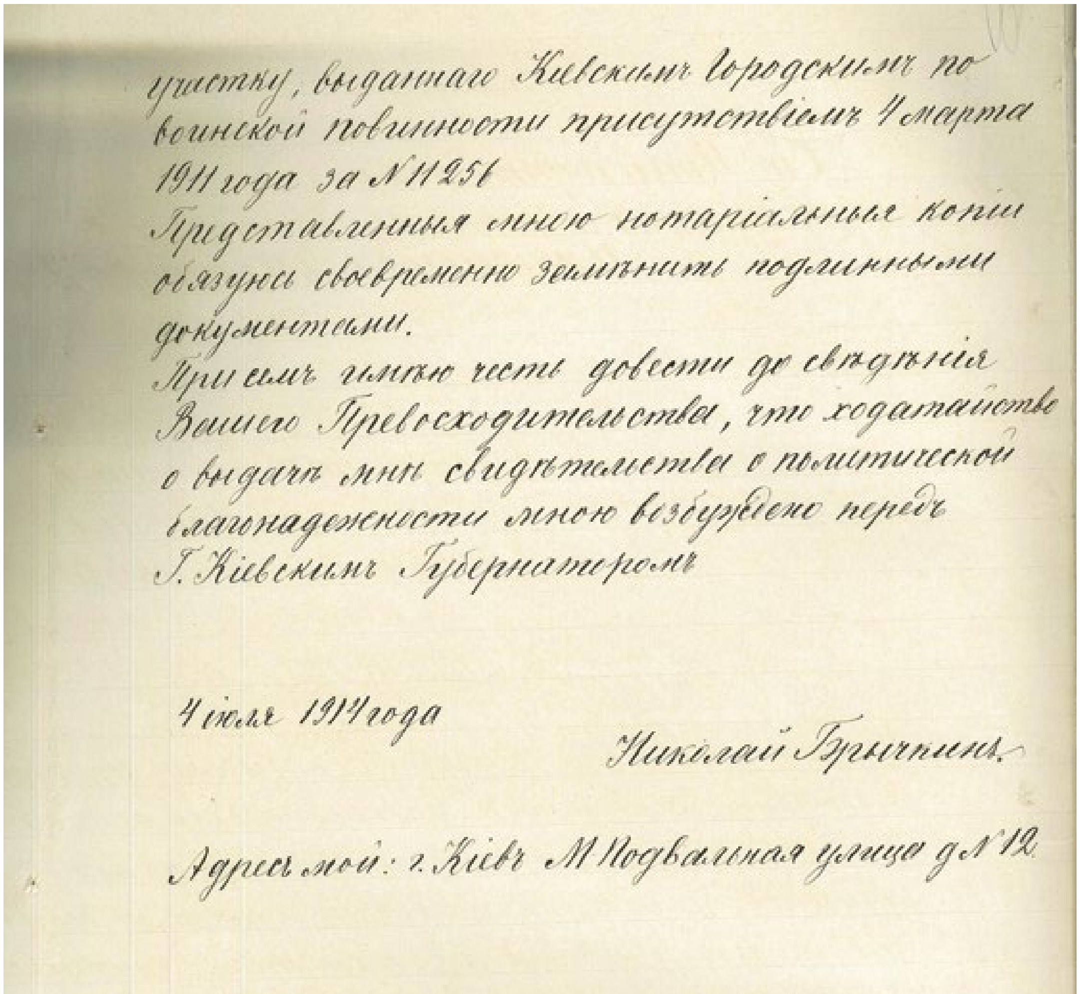
Окончившаго Кiевскую Первую Гимназiю Николая Григорьевича Брычкина

Прошенiе

Желая получить высшее техническое образованiе во ввѣренномъ Вашему Превосходительству институтѣ, прошу допустить меня къ конкурснымъ испытанiямъ въ семъ году и по выдержанiи ихъ принять на механическое отдѣленiе (I-й курсъ).

При настоящемъ прошенiи прилагаю нотарiальныя копiи слѣдующихъ моихъ документовъ, съ собственноручными копiями съ нихъ:

1) Аттестата зрѣлости, выданнаго Кiевской Первой Гимназiей 28 мая 1911 года за № 917
2) Свидѣтельства Кiевской Духовной Консисторiи отъ 12 марта 1902 г. за № 495
3) Нотарiальной копiи Высочайшей Грамоты о возведенiи въ сословiе потомственныхъ почетныхъ гражданъ, выданной нотарiусомъ Н. Кульчевскимъ 21 апрѣля 1911 года № 6027
4) Свидѣтельства о приписке къ призывному


участку, выданнаго Кіевскимъ Городскимъ по воинской повинности присутствіемъ 4 марта 1911 года за № 1251

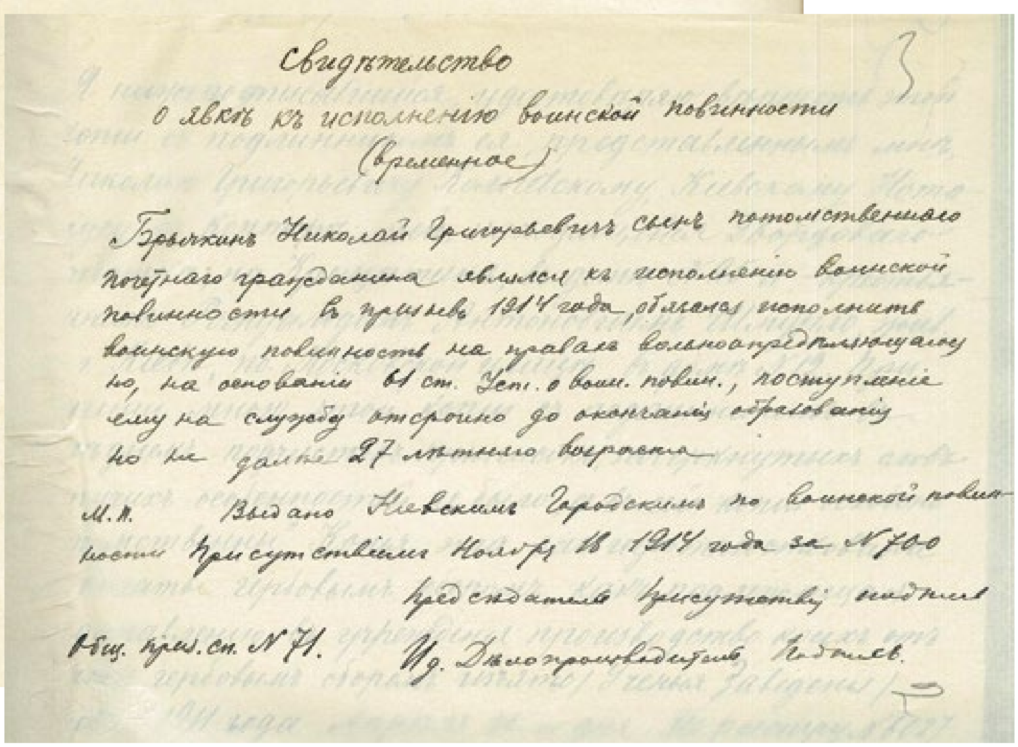
Представленныя мною нотаріальныя копіи обязуюсь своевременно замѣнить подлинными документами.

При семъ имѣю честь довести до свѣдѣнія Вашего Превосходительства, что ходатайство о выдачѣ мнѣ свидѣтельства о политической благонадежности мною возбуждено передъ Г. Кіевскимъ Губернаторомъ

4 іюля 1914 года

Николай Брычкинъ.

Адресъ мой: г. Кіевъ М. Подвальная улица д. № 12.

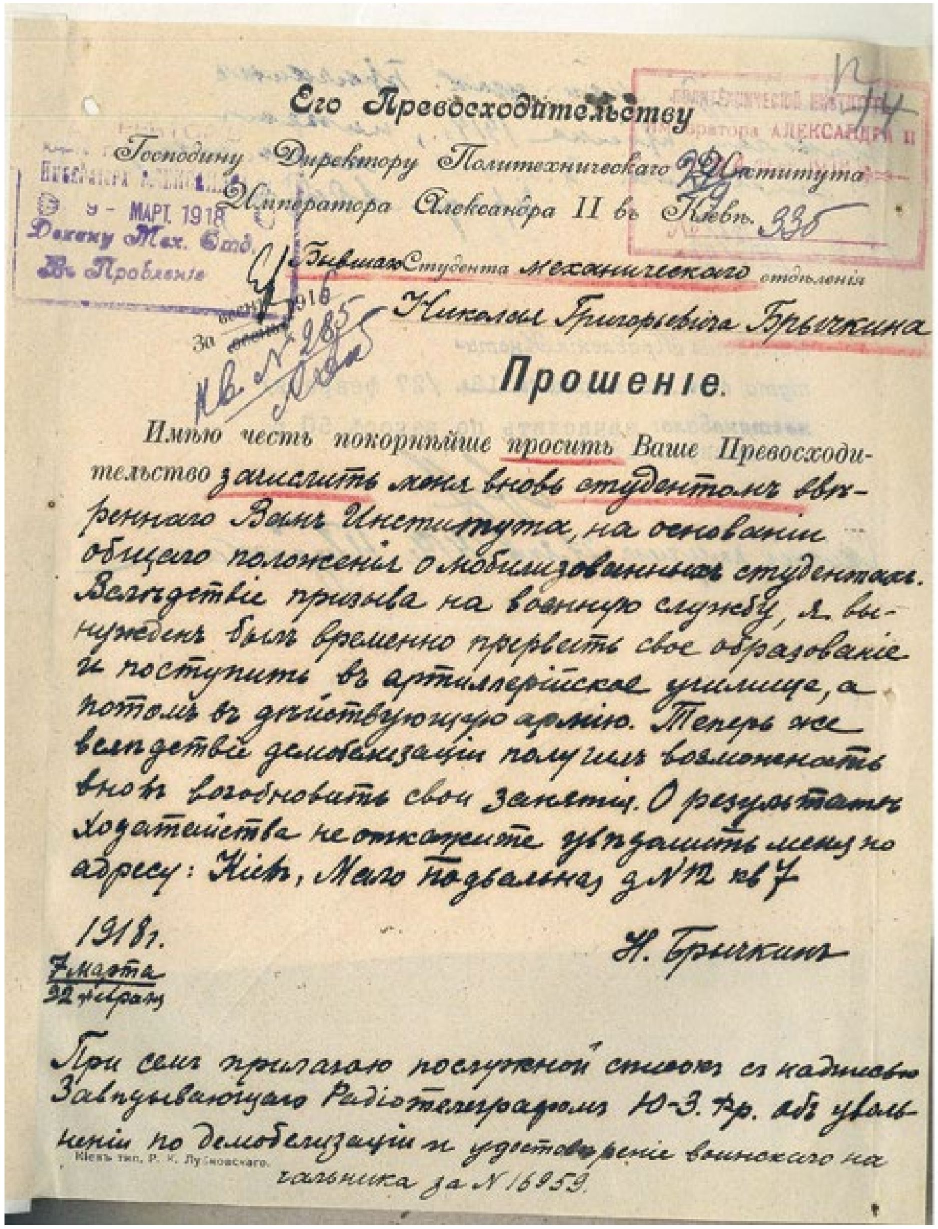

Свидѣтельство
о явкѣ къ исполненію воинской повинности
(временное)

Брычкинъ Николай Григорьевичъ сынъ потомственнаго почетнаго гражданина явился къ исполненію воинской повинности въ призывъ 1914 года, обязанъ исполнить воинскую повинность на правахъ вольноопредѣляющагося но, на основаніи 61 ст. Уст. о воин. повин., поступленіе ему на службу отсрочено до окончанія образованія но не далѣе 27 лѣтняго возраста

М. П. Выдано Кіевскимъ Городскимъ по воинской повинности присутствіемъ Ноября 16 1914 года за № 700

Предсѣдатель Присутствія подпись

Общ. прис. сп. № 71. И. д. Дѣлопроизводителя Бабаевъ.



Его Превосходительству

Господину Директору Политехническаго Института Императора Александра II въ Кiевѣ.

Бывшаго Студента Механическаго отдѣленiя

Николая Григорьевича Брычкина

Прошенiе.

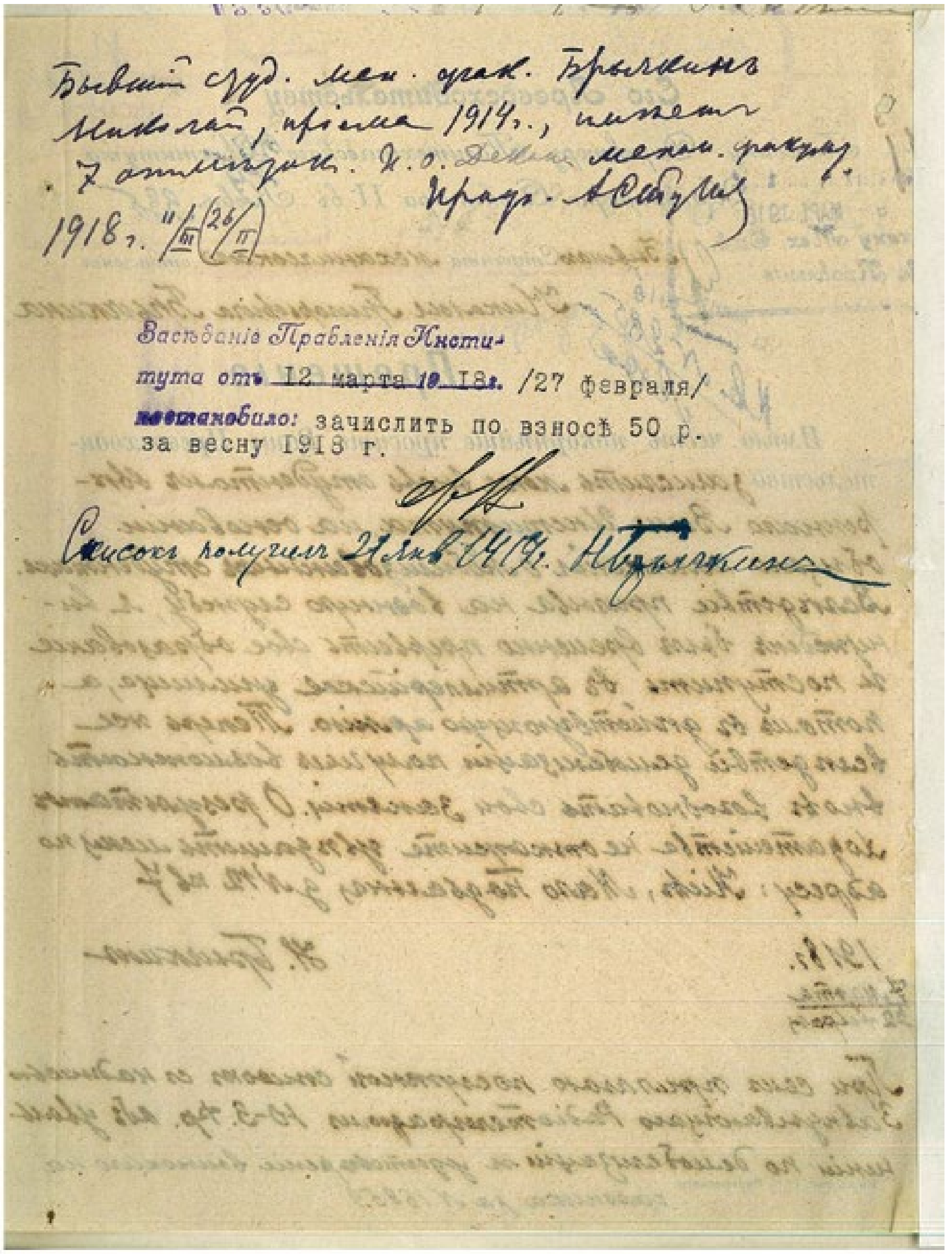
Имѣю честь покорнѣйше просить Ваше Превосходительство зачислить меня вновь студентомъ ввѣреннаго Вамъ Института, на основанiи общаго положенiя о мобилизованныхъ студентахъ. Вслѣдствiе призыва на военную службу, я вынужденъ былъ временно прервать свое образованiе и поступить въ артиллерiйское училище, а потомъ въ дѣйствующую армiю. Теперь же вслѣдствiе демобилизацiи получилъ возможность вновь возобновить свои занятiя. О результатахъ ходатайства не откажите увѣдомить меня по адресу: Кiевъ, Мало подвальная, д. № 12 кв. 7.

1918 г.
7 марта
22 февраля

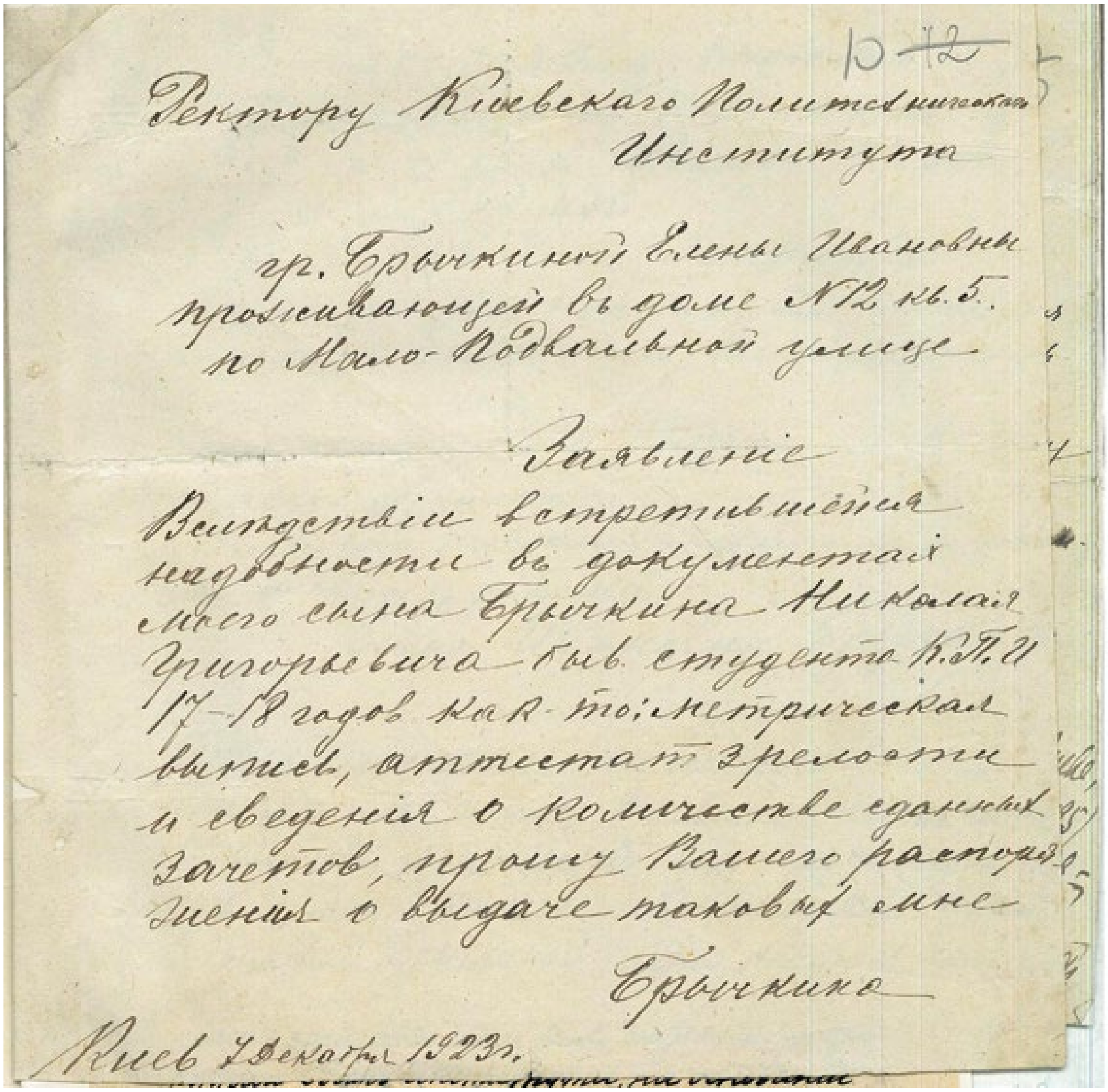
Н. Брычкинъ

При семъ прилагаю послужной списокъ съ кадетовъ Завѣдывающаго Радiотелеграфомъ Ю-З. Фр. объ увольненiи по демобилизацiи и удостовѣренiе воинскаго начальника за № 16959.

Кiевъ тип. Р. К. Лубковскаго.



Засѣданіе Правленія Инсти-
тута отъ ~~12 марта 19 18г.~~ /27 февраля/
постановило: зачислить по взносѣ 50 р.
за весну 1918 г.



10 ~~12~~

Ректору Кіевскаго Политехническаго
Института

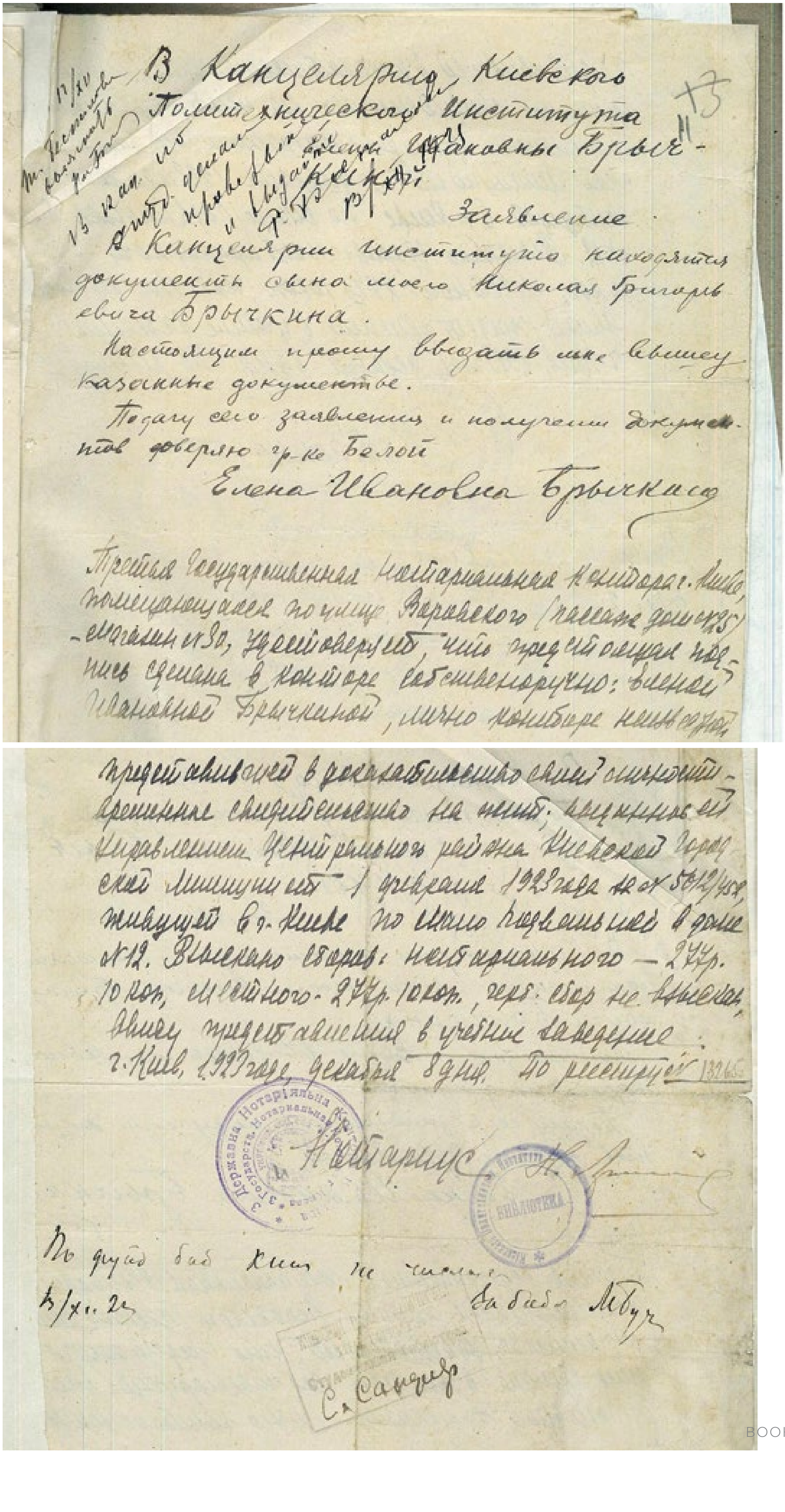
гр. Брычкиной Елены Ивановны
проживающей въ доме №12 кв. 5.
по Мало-Подвальной улице

Заявление

Вследствіи встретившейся
надобности въ документах
моего сына Брычкина Николая
Григорьевича быв. студента К.П.И
17–18 годов как-то: метрическая
выпись, аттестат зрелости
и сведения о количестве сданных
зачетов, прошу Вашего распоря-
жения о выдаче таковых мне

Брычкина

Киев 7 Декабря 1923 г.



В Канцелярию Киевского
Политехнического Института
Елены Ивановны Брычкиной

Заявление

В Канцелярии института находятся документы сына моего Николая Григорьевича Брычкина.

Настоящим прошу выдать мне вышеуказанные документы.

Подачу сего заявления и получение документов доверяю гр-ке Белой

Елена Ивановна Брычкина

Третья Государственная Нотариальная Контора г. Киева, помещающаяся по улице Владимирского (нас. дом № 25) — магазин № 30, удостоверяет, что предстоящая подпись сделана в конторе собственноручно: Еленой Ивановной Брычкиной, лично конторе неизвестной, представившей в удостоверение своей личности временное свидетельство на жит., выданное ей Управлением Центрального района Киевской Городской Милиции от 1 февраля 1923 года за № 5012/454, живущей в г. Киеве по улице Подвальной в доме № 12. Взыскано сборов: нотариального — 27 р. 10 коп, местного — 27 р. 10 коп., герб. сбор не взыскан, ввиду представления в учебное заведение.

г. Киев, 1923 года, декабря 8 дня. По реестру № 13265

Нотариус