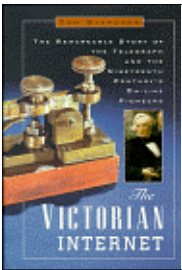




In This Issue:

**Engineering their Future**

Many Gins men and related male family members attained engineering degrees, contributing their knowledge, technical knowhow and talents to the society in which they lived. We

take a look at what the Soviet Union lost when these highly-skilled citizens and their offspring were forced to make a living elsewhere...

Book cover: Tom Standage's *The Victorian Internet* (1998)
Walker Publishing, New York

Missives on a Mission

Letters to relatives in Harbin did double duty during the early 1920s, when Nikolaj Gins, former Imperial Russian Army officer, manipulated the messages he sent in order to hasten his release from exile...

Mystery Photos

Postcard text helps solve more than one mystery...

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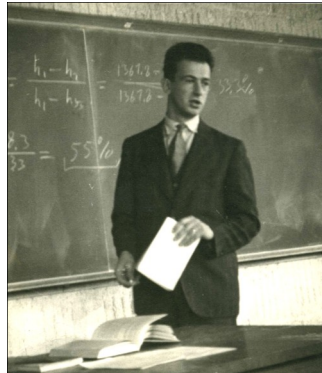
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Gins Family History

Research News



Sergei G. Guins teaching at the Case Institute, Cleveland in 1940.

Oral histories are a rich source of information about the past and we are fortunate that we have family historians who arranged interviews with Sergei Guins and Tanya Anderson (nee Gins) before they passed away. Not only do the interviews take planning and persistence, but transcribing the recorded exchanges is also a time consuming task. We have recently received a reward from the dedicated efforts of Kathy Guins, who conducted 8 1/2 hours of taped discussion with her father, Sergei; and Gen Guins, who helped to transcribe the second half of the recordings. Their labor has resulted in a fascinating 91 page oral history containing details of a very turbulent era in European and family history (from 1915–1946) seen through the eyes of an astute and observant child and young man.



This intriguing photograph has stories to tell: Julija Prokhnitskaja is seated on the left, while young Seva and younger Sergei Gins are near (or in front of) their mother, Emilija. We do not know the identities of the 5 gentlemen or one woman who are also part of the scene; nor do we know if this is the Gins apartment in St. Petersburg or Omsk or another setting. But judging by Sergei's apparent age — he was born in 1915 — we can estimate the approximate date to be between 1917 and 1920 — a very pivotal period in the lives of everyone in the Russian Empire. Despite the revolutionary events of the time, Sergei looks like a happy, healthy, alert child ready to burst into activity the moment he is released from the hold-still spell of the photographer. He appears to be free of the cares that weigh heavily on most of the others. Photographs on this page courtesy of Sara Guins from the Katherine Guins collection.



Optical telegraph of Claude Chappe on the Liermont near Nalbach, Germany

Engineering Their Future

Translations by Boris Dralyuk, C.Phil.

The engineers of Imperial Russia in the 19th and early 20th centuries were at the forefront of change, particularly with the evolving communication networks that carried government, business and personal transactions across the Empire. Telegraph communications — the Victorian internet of its day — was the specialty of several Gins engineers from that time period. From the *List of Ranks of Those Now in the Civil Service in the Podol'e Governorate* [Rus. "Spisok chinam sostojashchim na sluzhbe v Podol'skoj Gubernii"], on pg. 64 of this document (printed in 1872), "**Emel'jan Andreevich Gins**" is mentioned:

Collegiate Registrar [Rus. "Kollezhskij Registrator"] Emil'/Emel'jan is listed as the director of the Telegraph Department in the Podol'e Gubernija; at that point, he headed the station in the city of Tul'chin. Apparently he used the new name he chose for himself as early as 1872, rather than his birth name: Morits Emil Ludvigov Gins.

And pg. 10 of the *Podol'e Address-Calendar* [Rus. "Podol'skij adres-kalendar"], which was published in 1895, lists a Collegiate Secretary [Rus. "Kollezhskij Sekretar'"] **Vladimir Moritsovich Gins** as a Junior Mechanic in the Chişinău District Mail-Telegraph Board [Rus. "Upravlenie Kishinevskago pochno-telegrafnago okruga"]. Boris assures us that the term "mechanic" in this instance refers to someone who was an electrical engineer.

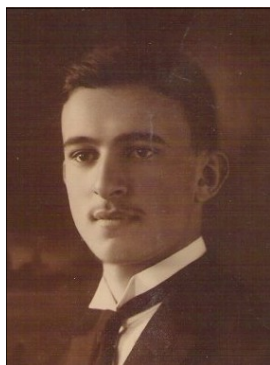
According to his grandson, (Igor) Harry Boris Bekkar, Vladimir moved on to start a business in Moscow where he built custom burglar alarm systems for banks. He later expanded his enterprise to operate his own telegraph and telephone business in Moscow, as well.

Another engineer, **Heinrich Heinrichovich Gergardt**, who was related to the Gins family through his marriage to Morits Emil Gins' daughter, Ludmila Emilievna, had an even more exalted position in the telegraph system hierarchy. According to his granddaughter-in-law, Alexandra Glazunov, Heinrich was sent by the Tsar to head the telegraph and telephone office of the Chinese Eastern Railway in Harbin. This is corroborated by his business card (seen on the following page). Underneath his name, is the title "Kontroler-mekhanik Telegrafa K. V. zh. D." Boris tells us that this indicates he was the Controller-Mechanic (Chief Engineer) of the Telegraph of the "Kitajsko-Vostochnoj zheleznoj dorogi", meaning "of the Chinese Eastern Railway." Like Morits Emil, Heinrich also used a name other than his birth name: Andre Andreevich Gergardt. Alexandra Glazunov said that he did this because he wanted a name that was different from his German given name and patronymic, since Germans were out of favor in Russia during World War I.

Also of this generation (born between 1850–1875), Modest Gins, was the second of Morits Emil's sons to become an engineer.



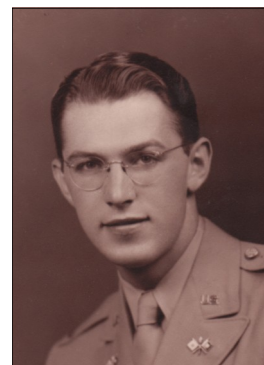
Sergei George Guins, abt 1923
Photo courtesy Sara Guins



Seva George Guins, 1928
Photo courtesy Sara Guins



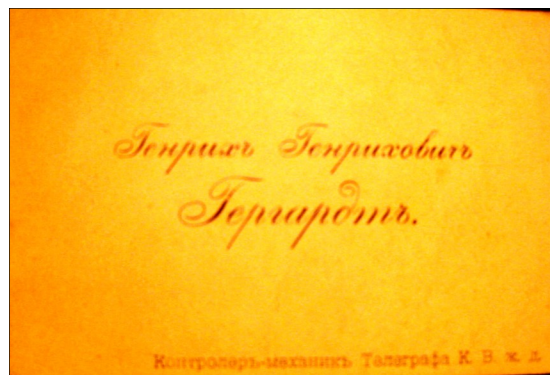
George Alexander Guins, 1938
Photo: Oregon News-Telegram



Harry Boris Bekkar, 1944
Photo courtesy Susan Morris



Heinrich Heinrichovich Gergardt (aka Andre Andreevich Gergardt). Photo courtesy Alexandra Glazunov.



Heinrich Heinrichovich Gergardt's business card — over 100 years old. Photo courtesy Alexandra Glazunov.



Daughters of Genrikh (Andre) Gergardt & Ludmila (Emilia) Gins: (left) Nadia, Zinaida, Marousia, and Lydia. Photo courtesy Alexandra Glazunov.

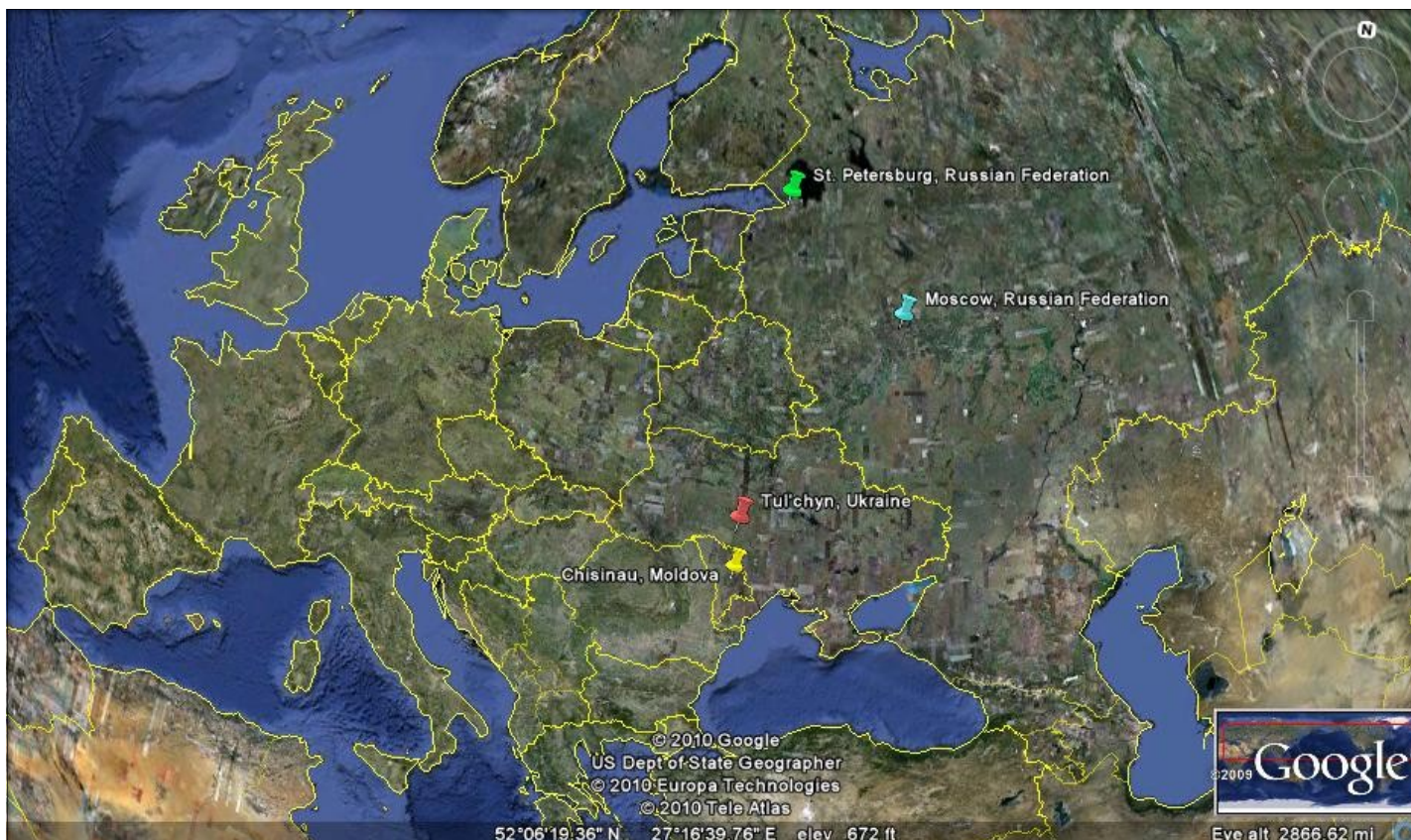
Boris located this source regarding Modest: the 1934 issue of the *Bulletin* of All-Soviet Committee for Higher Technical Education has information on a **Modest Emel'janovich Gins** — he was a professor of Electrotechnology (Electrical Engineering) at the Leningrad State Chemico-Technological Institute of Engineers of Food Service. His patronymic indicates that he may be the son of Morits Emil; it's an acceptable variant. Further, George Constantine Guins spoke about an uncle who lived in St. Petersburg (which became Leningrad from 1914-1991), in the oral history interview with Boris Raymond.

A third generation of Gins-related males pursued engineering: Andre Andreevich Gergardt's grandson, **Sergei Vladimirovich Glazunov**, was born in Harbin in 1913, and he, too, trained and became an engineer. His occupation was noted on the 1937 ship manifest when Sergei and his wife, Alexandra (nee Stepanstov), emigrated to North America. According to Alexandra, the family stayed in Holland for 7 years where her husband worked as Chief Engineer for the American Oil company, before returning to live in the U.S.

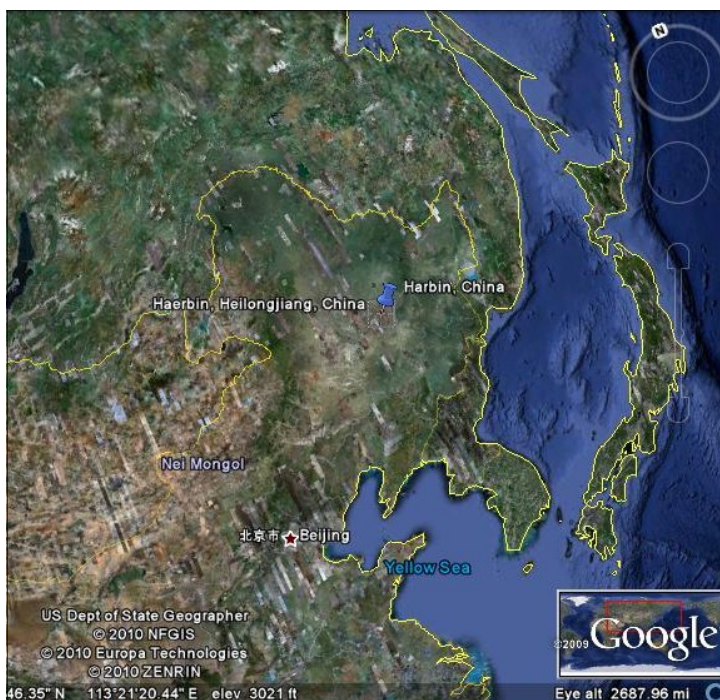
Additionally, Andre and Emilia Gergardt (nee Gins) had a grandson-in-law, **Vladimir Pavlovich Kravetsky** (b. 1907), married to granddaughter Lucia Pavlovna Tkacheva, who was a radio engineer, as stated on the 1936 ship manifest of their journey to America.



Vladimir Glazunov and wife, Zinaida Gergardt, and son, Sergei. Photo courtesy Alexandra Glazunov.



Google Earth map of Europe showing the location of cities where Gins engineers lived and worked: from lower left, Chisinau, Moldova (formerly Kishinev, Bessarabia, Russia) - Vladimir Moritsov Emiliev Gins; Tul'chyn, Ukraine - Morits Emil Ludvigov Gins; St. Petersburg, Russian Federation (formerly Petrograd, 1914-1924, then Leningrad, 1924-1991) - Modest Moritsov Emiliev Gins; Moscow, Russian Federation—Vladimir Moritsov Emiliev Gins.



Google Earth map of Asia showing the location of Harbin, China, where Heinrich (Andre) Gergardt lived and worked as Controller of the Telegraph for the Chinese Eastern Railway.

Boris Nicolas Bekkar was another Gins relation, married to Vera Vladimirovna Gins. Boris and Vera emigrated to the West in 1923, and he became an engineer while in this country, working for CBS television for 20 years.

The fourth generation of Gins engineers (that we know of to date) includes both sons of George Constantine and Emilia Lvovna Guins: **Seva George Guins**, who was born in St. Petersburg in 1910, received his education as a mechanical engineer in Belgium, and moved to the States in 1938. And **Sergei George Guins**, born in St. Petersburg in 1915, who left Harbin as a student and entered the U.S. in 1934. He studied at the University of Michigan and earned his degree in aeronautical engineering.

The second son of Aleksandr Moritsov Emiliev Gins, **George Alexander Guins**, was the same age as Sergei when he entered the U.S. (19), but George arrived in 1923. Born in 1904 in Semipalatinsk, Russia, George studied hydroelectric engineering at the College of Puget Sound.

Finally, **Harry Boris Bekkar**, b. 1920 in either Chita, Russia or Harbin, China, emigrated as a child in 1923 and eventually earned a degree in electrical engineering from UC Berkeley, where George Constantine Guins taught as a lecturer.



Nikolaj Konstantinovich Gins of the
31st Siberian Artillery Regiment.
Photo courtesy Vicky Mlyniec

Missives on a Mission

Translation by Boris Dralyuk, C.Phil.

In his attempts to gain permission from Soviet authorities to leave Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, to rejoin his wife, Julija, in Harbin in the 1920s, Nikolaj Gins embedded messages in his letters to relatives in Harbin with meaning beyond mere personal correspondence.

He tried to "soften" the attitude of his superiors so that they would grant him the freedom to travel. Nikolaj was aware that all mail during that time was opened and read by others, and he planted information that he thought might help him in his quest to secure permits to join his family in the East. Following is Boris' translation of (and comments about) a letter Nikolaj sent to his Aunt Mila (Ludmila Emilievna Gergardt nee Gins) in July 1921 that illustrates the point:

[Envelope] *New city*
 Pravlenskaja 5

A. A. Gergardt
for Julija L'vovna

4 / VII

Dear aunt Mila!

You can't imagine how happy I was to receive a letter from you!..

Here, where I am completely alone, where I am surrounded by entirely foreign faces, -- it is uncommonly good to receive a letter, breathing with love and concern, from a person so near to me!

You, my dear, must know how much I love you all, and how I yearn to return to the East, to which, during my 10-year residence there, I've managed to grow accustomed [lit. "related"]...

Yes, a difficult ordeal has fallen to my lot, and it was very difficult for me to get held up here; it's not for nothing that I've already sprouted gray hairs, a sign of heavy troubles and encroaching old age.

Yes, how sad it is, but that last thing has started to appear far too early around here -- and it's no rarity to

meet a young person who is already hoary with age [lit. "hoary with grey spots"].

In all reality, if we examine it, this phenomenon is perfectly understandable in today's revolutionary times, when so many tragedies have played out, when so many have been left widowed and orphaned!..

*Not long ago a soldier I know rode out to your parts, having been transferred to the People's Army for duty. [He is likely referring to the Far Eastern Republic's People's-Revolutionary Army, under the command of Vasilij Konstantinovich Blücher (1889-1938); this would be in keeping with his Red persona.] **You can imagine how I envious I was, that I'd never served on active military duty, and didn't have this brilliant opportunity to participate in the battle against the adventurers** [a word which has a particularly negative connotation in Russian, approaching something like "plunderers"]...*

I so want to see order and a peaceful -- in the literal sense -- life, that I have no words to express this on paper.

One thing is left to us -- to live, and to hope, and to rely on fate: "To whom and how it's fated -- to him it so shall be!" I, as a fatalist, believe in it...

My life here has passed rather bearably, and thanks to my hosts -- simple folk who have nevertheless grown very attached to me -- I am always sated and never feel hunger, which for many is not far off [lit. "not beyond the hills"]: there's nothing to trade, and nothing to buy with, since a service-person doesn't have tens of thousands lying around.

Only speculators have such sums nowadays, with the change in economic politics...

Well, my dear, forgive my babbling. I warmly, warmly kiss you and Uncle, and embrace you in my thoughts.

Your ardently loving nephew,

Nikolaj

P. S. Greetings to everyone.

Mystery Photograph

Mysteries Solved!?

Translation by Boris Dralyuk, C.Phil.

The beautiful photograph of the Prokhnitskij siblings from Kishinev in the early 1900s, provided by Sara Guins (and a similar one belonging to Vicky Mlyniec), has been a bit of a puzzle. We know that Emilija is sitting on the left and Julija is standing next to her, but we still do not have a clear idea of who the young boys are or the identity of the woman standing behind them. At last, with the evidence presented below, we have a better idea of who she might be. Read on...



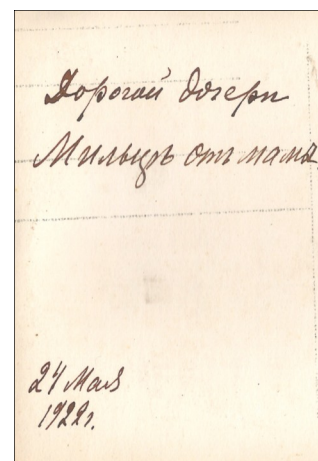
Maria Andreevna Prokhnitskaja (nee Lovochinskaja)



Prokhnitskij family group in Kishinev: Emilija, seated left, and Julija, standing, with unidentified woman and boys. Photo courtesy of Sara Guins.



Maria Andreevna Prokhnitskaja, 1922



Postcard back

I posted the oval photograph in the January newsletter to see if we could identify this woman. Recently, I was able to figure out who she was when I realized that I already had a file showing writing on the back of the photo postcard. The note makes it clear that the image is of **Maria Andreevna Prokhnitskaja (nee Lovochinskaja)**. Boris Dralyuk tells us that the card reads: "To my dear daughter / Mil'tsa [Emilija] / from mama." The same message was on the back of both photos of Maria; the one with the hat also had a date of 1922.

Maria was married to Lev Vladimirovich Prokhnitskij, who was born in 1856. They lived in Kishinev, Bessarabia, part of the Russian Empire (now Chisinau, Moldova). Their children, listed on Lev's military service record, were Vsevolod, Modest, Emilija, Julija, and Sergei. We also know of another son, Nikolaj, from the formal family photo taken in Harbin. Maria was part Bulgarian, part Moldavian, according to son-in-law Georgij Konstantinovich Gins in his oral history interview with Boris Raymond. Photos courtesy of Sara Guins from the Katherine Guins collection.