



Scans of historical photos
and lithographs/line art





KEARNY STREET—WEST SIDE—FROM CALIFORNIA TO SACRAMENTO ST.

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My grandmother's cousin's Navjot, ca. 1910.



My maternal grandmother, Meherbai Khan, on her father's knee, ca. 1885.

grandmother rarely entered the kitchen, then the province of the cook and his helper, but she had a strong sense of how things should look and taste. In the early part of the twentieth century, cookbooks in Gujarati began to appear, with recipes for not only traditional Parsi food but also all the European exotics that had been absorbed and, in some cases, unrecognizably transformed. These were intended to be manuals for instructing the household cook. My grandmother bought everything that came out, and I still have some of her books. Although good food continued to be part of family life after my grandfather's sudden death at fifty-five, my grandmother retreated into her inherent austerity. Her beloved Noshirwan, whose word was law, brought out a tenderness in her that her children never really felt or ever saw again after their father died. They all remember him as a doting husband and father, broad-minded and fair, committed to letting his daughters do whatever they needed to do to be happy, even when it meant going along with my oldest aunt's divorce from a suitable but

to tell. I draw mainly from my memory. I also paint stories I heard from my Apt friends or read in the Apt chronicles, the memorial book for my town. Regrettably, I have very little imagination. I don't dream or, if I do, the dream is nothing I can paint. I can only paint what I lived through. I can only paint what is in my memory and in my head.

I paint these scenes as I remember them as a child. That's the reason why, in my early paintings, the rooms are so huge and I am so small. What I am trying to do, basically, is not to glorify myself but to portray life as it was. I hope it gives you some idea what life was like. We were living in very crowded conditions—we had two rooms—and we were considered middle class. I don't really remember any illustrated books or pictures on the wall at home. I don't remember ever going to a museum or seeing the great masters. But I did have a good art teacher in public school, and he took us to the church to draw the windows, doors, and carvings from the outside. I also saw the painted interior of the synagogue.

The first painting that I did was of my mother's kitchen. I used this theme because my daughter asked me. She wanted to know what my mother's kitchen looked like in the Old Coun-



Kitchen

Scans from original watercolors

reached into his or her pocket, and in a short time the iron pot was full of money. When it became too heavy to hold, Yankl set the pot down on the table. He regaled the company with jokes and songs. The band struck up a lively tune, and everyone—men, women, and children—danced. Reb Tsvi Hirsh, who officiated at the wedding, stepped into the large circle of dancers. Small in stature, head held high, his eyes looking toward the sky, his beard and sidelocks flying, Reb Tsvi Hirsh began to dance. He invited the newlyweds to join him in the obligatory *mitsve-tants*. The merriment continued late into the night. Sure enough, the cholera epidemic subsided in a few days.



*King Kazimierz
the Great
Entertaining
His Jewish
Girlfriend,
Esterka*

We knew from other stories we heard that Jews had been in Poland for a very long time. According to legend, Kazimierz Wielki, King Kazimierz the Great, had a Jewish girlfriend. Her name was Ester, but she was known affectionately as Esterka in Polish and Esterke in Yiddish. She was sort of parallel to Ester of Purim fame. She was also, it was said, instrumental in the king's inviting Jews to Poland to promote commerce. That would have been about seven hundred years ago. King Kazimierz was said to have entertained Ester under a great oak tree. In this painting, two peasants serve the royal pair, while a knight in armor



Original image



Adjusted image