

# Archival Discoveries Related to Ayn Rand's Residences in Saint Petersburg (Petrograd/Leningrad)

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**ABSTRACT:** This article provides new information about Ayn Rand's residences in Saint Petersburg (Petrograd/Leningrad). The authors, who based the article on hitherto unknown archival documents, discovered new information regarding the exact location of the apartments where the Rosenbaums lived in the city from 1904 through the 1930s. Furthermore, the article provides information about where Rand's grandparents, Berko (Boris) Kaplan and his wife Sarah, had been living. Additionally, it offers English translations and Russian originals of archival documents related to the aforementioned locations.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayn Rand, Alissa Rosenbaum, the Guzarchiks, biography, Russia, Soviet Union, archives, Saint Petersburg, Petrograd, Leningrad

## Introduction

The last decade became the time of the discovery of several important documents related to the Russian and Soviet period in the biography of the writer and philosopher Ayn Rand (Nikiforova and Kizilov 2012; 2018; 2020; Sciabarra and Solovyev 2021). Important Russian documents related to Ayn Rand's biography were published earlier in the 1990s and 2000s by Chris Matthew Sciabarra (1999; 2005; [1995] 2013, 363–91). Most of these discoveries were held in the archives located in Saint Petersburg and Simferopol, Crimea. This article presents a few important and hitherto unknown archival documents found in Saint Petersburg.

Ayn Rand, born Alissa Rosenbaum, lived in Saint Petersburg from her birth in 1905 until January 1926, with an interruption over the period from fall 1918 to summer 1921, which was spent by her family in Odessa and Crimea. It was in Saint Petersburg (which was twice renamed during that period: to Petrograd in 1914 and to Leningrad in 1924) that she spent her childhood, studied in gymnasium (most of it), graduated from university, and began studies at the State College of Screen Arts (Государственный институт экранного искусства).

Many documents related to the history of Saint Petersburg in the prerevolutionary period (before 1917) were lost. This caveat especially applies to those documents that were not officially stored in large state institutions. That is why many of the occupant lists that had been accurately kept in every block of apartments were lost during the turmoil of revolutionary events. For example, during the research work for this article, Mikhail Kravtsov examined Nevsky Avenue (or Невский проспект, the main street of the city) occupant lists that survived in the Saint Petersburg State Historical Archive (the only official collection preserving prerevolutionary documents). He was able to find such lists only for nine apartment buildings out of approximately a hundred sixty. According to his estimation only several dozen such lists survived for the roughly three thousand total tenement houses across the city before 1917.

Fortunately, all known buildings of Saint Petersburg that were connected to Rand survived. Among them were places where Alissa lived, studied, went to the opera or movies, and visited friends. During this period, the apartment number was mentioned neither in the address line nor in correspondence or other official documents or residential or business directories. Together with this total absence of occupant lists for all places where the Rosenbaums lived, the modern researcher faces a serious problem: one knows the street address but must guess the apartment numbers, relying on recollections and interviews that sometimes conflict with one another.

The aim of the archival research that we conducted in Saint Petersburg Central State Historical Archive and Saint Petersburg Central State Archive in

2021–22 was to find new documental evidence regarding the residences connected with Rand. The central results of this research are presented below.

#### **40 Zabalkansky Avenue (42 Moskovsky Avenue): Alissa Rosenbaum's Birthplace**

The early years of Alissa Rosenbaum are connected to the apartment and pharmacy located at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue (42 Moskovsky Avenue). It was very difficult to answer several questions related to this building. We had to find out the following:

- Where was the pharmacy located in the building, and where did the pharmacist who worked there live?
- Was Ayn Rand's father, Zelman Wolf Rosenbaum (or Zinovy Rosenbaum in Russian documents), living in that pharmacist's apartment with his wife before January 1905 or not?
- Was Alissa born at home?

Our study was made even more complicated by the following facts:

- The pharmacy where Rand's father had been working was relocated from the second to the first floor between 1921 and 1939.
- Numbers of the apartments at this building were changed after the revolution.
- Floor plans of the building with apartment numbers of the period were lost.
- In 1906 Zinovy Rosenbaum had been working in two pharmacies simultaneously.

Unfortunately, not a single document gave a direct answer to these questions. Despite this, we have found a set of documents that provided enough information to answer each of our research questions.

The mortgage contract file for the apartment building at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue ends in 1903 (TsGIA SPB 515/1/89A). Unfortunately, there are no floor plans in this document. There are two tenant lists for 1900 and 1902 in the file; each of them mentions the pharmacy that was owned by E. M. Kozakova (TsGIA SPB 515/1/89A, 111, 142). It was located in the large apartment on the second floor. In fact, it consisted of apartments 14 and 15, which were joined together. And in 1902 address books we can see the name of the pharmacy: Zabalkanskaya (*Ves' Peterburg* 1902, 1074).

Both tenant lists contain the same information about the pharmacy. Below we reproduce the list of 1900, which is more accurate than the other one (TsGIA SPB 515/1/89A, 111; Figure 1).

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№ квартиры.	Знание и фамилия жильцов, съ показаніемъ числа комнатъ и службъ, равно условий найма (по кон-трактамъ или безъ оныхъ).	Годовая плата.	По которымъ арен-даторъ получаетъ плату.	ЗАМѢЧАНІЯ ОПЕЧАТНОЙ КОММИССИИ.
I 9.	Козина мануфакт. крогловля -	1800	месцу	1/2 отъ
I 10.	Курбанова канбаска	1800	-	1/2 отъ
I 11.	Кесандяма морск. поштаны 1 дверь и 2 зерк. окна -	780	-	1/2 отъ
I 12.	Кесандяма морск. поштаны 1 дверь и 2 зерк. окна -	660	-	1/2 отъ
I 13.	Сергеева брусная морск. 1 дверь, 3 зерк. окна и кухня съ туалетомъ	840	-	1/2 отъ
II 14.	Козакова анкета 12 комнатъ, мануфакт. кухня, 2 кухни, ванна	3000	-	1/2 отъ
II 15.	Клид, мебельная	-	-	-
III 16.	Брафманна - 9 комн. мануфакт., ванна, 2 кухни, парадная, кухня	2100	-	1/2 отъ

10.9.20

Figure 1. Tenant list for the apartment building at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue, Saint Petersburg, 1900 (TsGIA SPB 515/1/89A, 111).

Here is what one can read at the bottom of the page after Latin figure II (second floor) (column titles first):

Apartment Number: 14, 15 [joined]

Tenant's Rank & Last Name, With Number of Rooms and Rent Details  
(with contract or not): Kozakova [underlined]—pharmacy 12 rooms,  
laboratory, kitchen, 2 water closets, storeroom, cold room

Annual Fee: 3000 [rubles]

Payment Received until:—

Evaluation Commission Remarks: Without firewood

Today there is no apartment 14 in the building, while apartment 15 is on the third floor. Before the 1917 revolution, commercial properties were registered under apartment numbers sequentially with residential apartments. They were moved to a separate list with their own numbers at some point after 1917. It can clearly be seen on the modern floor plan of apartment 15 that it was created as part of number 16; as a result, the last apartment became smaller (Rosreestr 1922, 5). By comparing prerevolution tenant lists (TsGIA SPB 515/1/89A, 111, 142) with modern floor distribution of other existing residential apartment numbers, we can make a reasonable conclusion that the old apartment numbers were preserved on the upper floors. We believe that apartments 14 and 15 were located on the second floor in the wings of the building adjoining the corner of Zabalkansky (Moskovsky) and Klinsky avenues.

In 1924, the vice manager of the pharmacy, G. A. Ginzburg, composed an appeal to the condominium suggesting that apartment 15 should be given to him as service housing and claiming that it had been so historically (TsGA SPB R-8575/3/1519, 33). The description of the premises given in that document provides evidence of our contention that the pharmacy was located in the building in former apartment 14 on the second floor, facing Zabalkansky (Moskovsky) Avenue, and the pharmacist's apartment facing Klinsky Avenue. Floor plans of 1898 match this description perfectly (TsGIA 513/102/4858, 72).

The residential listings in the *Whole Saint Petersburg* directories mention that in 1905 Zinovy Rosenbaum lived at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue (42 Moskovsky Avenue today) (*Ves' Peterburg* 1905, III: 549). Zinovy became the manager of Zabalkanskaya pharmacy located in that very building at some point before 1906 (*Ves' Peterburg* 1906, 1137).

However, sources testify that in 1905 Rosenbaum was a manager of the Moskovskaya pharmacy at 7 Raz'ezzhaya (Разъезжая) Street, situated 2.2 kilometers away from 40 Zabalkansky (*Ves' Peterburg* 1905, 1114). Deeper study of the *Whole Saint Petersburg* directories for 1905 and 1906 provides an important clue. The pharmacy at 40 Zabalkansky was owned by Dobrulia Kongeim (*Ves' Peterburg* 1905, 1113), wife of Borukh Isaakovich Kongeim. The latter, in his

turn, owned the pharmacy at 7 Raz'ezzhaya (*Ves' Peterburg* 1905, 1114). Dobrulia Borisovna (Berkovna / Borukhovna) Kongeim, née Kaplan, was the sister of Ayn Rand's mother, Anna Borisovna (Hanna Berkovna) Kaplan (Nikiforova and Kizilov 2020, 26). According to the 1905 residential directory, Borukh Kongeim was a pharmacist and lived at 7 Raz'ezzhaya Street (*Ves' Peterburg* 1905, III: 311).

We believe that in 1905 Zinovy Rosenbaum was working for the Kongeim family, who were his wife's relatives, as a daytime manager of Moskovskaya pharmacy at 7 Raz'ezzhaya Avenue and a nighttime pharmacist of the Zabalkanskaya pharmacy located at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue (42 Moskovsky Avenue today). In that period, it was typical for pharmacists to live in the apartment located close to their pharmacies so as to enable a business to stay open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Our conjecture that Zinovy worked at two pharmacies at the same time is validated by the fact that the following year he is mentioned in the directory as manager of both Moskovskaya and Zabalkanskaya pharmacies living at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue (*Ves' Peterburg* 1906, 1137, 1138, III: 565). The 40 Zabalkansky manager's first name is rendered as "Genn." (*Ves' Peterburg* 1906, 1137), which is definitely a misprint; it becomes "Zin." for Zinovy the following year (*Ves' Peterburg* 1907, 1170).

On the basis of the evidence, we conclude that it was here, at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue, apartment 15, that Alissa Rosenbaum was born. At that time, only poor and homeless women gave birth in the hospital; wealthier families typically gave mothers the opportunity to give birth at home (Al-Gailani and Davis 2014, 1). Thus, there is no doubt that Anna (Hanna) Rosenbaum gave birth to her first daughter in the apartment where the family lived. The fact that Isaak Guzarchik, husband of Anna Rosenbaum's sister Elizabeth (Elizaveta) Guzarchik, was an obstetrician and lived close to the Rosenbaums at 27 Zabalkansky Avenue (*Ves' Peterburg* 1905, III: 184) provides further evidence for this hypothesis.

Western students of Rand's biography usually state that she was born in Saint Petersburg, Russia, on 2 February 1905. However, it is seldom noted that this date is in accordance with the Gregorian calendar used by most of the world today; until 1917, Russia used the Julian calendar. According to the Julian calendar, the author was born on 20 January 1905—and this is the date one can see in Ayn Rand's birth entry (Figure 2; TsGIA SPB 422/3/394, 7).<sup>1</sup> The same dating issue applies to most historical documents that we mention later in the text. To avoid any misunderstanding, hereafter we add [J] after the date for the Julian calendar and [G] for the Gregorian one. It is also important to note that, to our knowledge, the writer herself continued indicating 20 January as her birthdate in the American period of her life as well. For example, this date can be seen on the American green card issued to Mrs. Charles Francis O'Connor (that is, Ayn Rand) on 29 June 1929 (Britting 2004, 39).



ЧАСТЬ I-Я О РОДИВШИХСЯ.						
№	Кто совершает обрядъ обрѣзанія.	Число и мѣсяць.		Гдѣ родился.	Состояніе отца, имена отца и матери.	Гдѣ родился и какое ему или ей дано имя.
		Хрестіан- скій.	Еврейскій.			
8		Родился 25 января и имени Иованнъ Юозилъ членъ село 1905 года	27 Швага	122 2 1 1	У Провидора Зейбманна - Вансера Зоравича <u>Розенбаума</u> и фантоной сего имени Ханн Берасовны (отца же Ханна Борисовича)	Зорб Алиса. 127111.15.
5	Полоумнѣй и мтарашнѣ Герсона Микх	Родился 25 января и имени село 1 Саврава село 1905 года	2 Ивара I	5 1 1	У Личнаго по ремешному управленію домника Иуста Госева Боруха Вира Гордона и фантоной сего имени Вриши Зейбмановича	Сина Изра-Мейеръ Ию.с.Мил 30ти 24. 20 на мѣт. адъюгеръ ИНОС
9		Родился 27 января и имени Иованнъ Юозилъ членъ село 1905 года	4 Ивара I	122 17 130	У Помощника по ремешному управленію Ивана Провидора Самена (Звсаи) Авраамовича <u>Еррона</u> и фантоной сего имени Роса Ивигициной, урожденной Швейцерь	Зорб Вѣра.

Figure 2. Alissa Rosenbaum birth entry in Saint Petersburg Choral Synagogue Parish Register of Jewish Merchants Births, 1902 (TsGIA SPB 422/3/394, 7).

Ayn Rand's birth name was Alissa Rosenbaum (Алиса Розенбаум); her family sometimes called her Alice (the Anglicized version of Alissa) or Aliska (a diminutive from Alissa). Her relatives also used other nicknames for her in Russia and the Soviet Union, while the penname Ayn Rand appeared apparently only after Rand moved to the United States in 1926.<sup>2</sup>

Alissa's birth entry (see Figure 2) reads as follows (in English translation):

part 1 regarding births

№: Females: 8

№: Males: [—]

Who performed the rite of circumcision: [—]

Christian Date and Month: Born on 20 January [J] and prayers were offered on the same day of this year 1905

Jewish Date and Month: Shevat 27

Place of birth: [Saint Petersburg]

Father's Position, Names of Father and Mother: Pharmacist  
Zelman-Wolf Zorakhovich Rozenbaum and his legitimate wife Hana  
Berkovna (alias Anna Borisovna)

Who was Born and How was Named: Daughter Alissa

13 August 1921 [G] K.B. (TsGIA SPB 422/3/394, 7)<sup>3</sup>

This last line was added in violet ink on 13 August 1921 by archivist K. F. Burkman (Sciabarra and Solovyev [2021, 151] render this surname as Buriman). It was added to indicate the date when a copy of the birth certificate was made. This copy was brought by Alissa Rosenbaum to Petrograd University before her entrance exams. Its facsimile and English translations were published by Sciabarra and Solovyev (2021, 151). Other scholars published a handwritten copy of this copy that was taken by Ayn Rand with her to America (Britting 2004, 2; Nikiforova and Kizilov 2012, 306). It should be noted additionally that there are two dates on the certificate copy. The one at the upper left is 13 August 1921 [G]. This is the date when this copy was issued by K. F. Burkman; it correlates with the last line that was added to Rand's birth entry. The date on the stamp below is 20 August 1921 [G]; it indicates the date when the copy was officially certified as valid.

### **120 Nevsky (October 25th) Avenue: The Rosenbaum Family's Main Place of Living**

We knew that in approximately 1909 Zinovy became a pharmacist at the drugstore that occupied a room in the large apartment 1 on the second floor at 120 Nevsky Prospect. His family moved to the same apartment. Pharmacy windows faced Znamenskaya Square (now Vosstaniya Square); other rooms



looked out onto Nevsky and to the courtyard. We knew this from putting together information from the *Whole Saint Petersburg* directory (*Ves' Peterburg* 1910, III: 722), building construction floor plans (TsGIA SPB 513/102/9215, 5), photos of that period and Rand's own recollections (Nikiforova and Kizilov 2020, 28–29).

The best quality photo of the building with the pharmacy sign above the second-floor windows is shown in Figure 3 (TsGAKFFD SPB D 8630). The two signs facing the square and Nevsky Avenue read *Александровская аптека* (that is, “Alexandrovskaya Apteka” or Alexander Pharmacy) each. The address book (*Ves' Peterburg* 1911, 1246) informs us that Zinovy Rosenbaum worked there. We know the exact date when the image was taken—23 May 1909 [J]. It was the day of the opening ceremony of the monument to Tsar Alexander III that stood in the center of Znamenskaya (Vosstaniya) square from 1909 to 1937.

We think that the family's relocation to the new apartment took place in 1909, although in the *Whole Saint Petersburg* for 1909 Zinovy was mentioned in both residential and business directories at the previous address at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue (*Ves' Peterburg* 1909, 1143, III: 672). One can be sure that the new information should have been delivered to the editorial office of the directory by 1 November of the preceding year (*Ves' Peterburg* 1909, III: 2). In the 1910 residential directory, Zinovy Rosenbaum's address is 120 Nevsky Avenue, which means that the information about his relocation to the new apartment was



**Figure 3.** Photo of Alexandrovskaya Pharmacy on Znamenskaya (Vosstaniya) square, Saint Petersburg, 1909 (TsGAKFFD SPB D 8630).

provided by him before 1 November 1909. The information about the pharmacy was not submitted to the 1909 business directory at all.

There are some discrepancies in the sources that caused doubts regarding the Rosenbaum residence apartment number (Nikiforova and Kizilov 2020, 26). However, the new sources that were discovered by Mikhail Kravtsov allow us to conclude that the apartment was located on the second floor, the number 1 residential unit. According to Kravtsov's measurements and calculations based on the apartment plan (TsGIA SPB 513/102/9215, 5) it must have been close to 2,940 square feet (273 m<sup>2</sup>).

One can see the tenant list for that block of apartments for the fall of 1908 (TsGIA SPB 515/1/232A, 92) in Figure 4.

On the bottom of the page one can read the following text:

#### Second Floor

[in pencil on right margin] II [floor]

Apartment Number: 1

Tenant's Rank & Last Name, With Number of Rooms and Rent Details (with contract or not): Pharmacy. Pharmacist Rosenbaum, 7 rooms, servant's room, bathroom and kitchen, contract for 12 years.

Annual Fee: 5000 rubles for the first 5 years, 6000 for the last 7 years annually.

Payment Received Till: Rent shall be paid from 12, November 1908 [J]

Evaluation Commission Remarks: [accepted as] 2300–2300 [rubles]

This entry may be considered legal proof of the fact that the Rosenbaum family shared the same apartment with the pharmacy where Zinovy worked. It also gives us the exact date when the family's relocation from Zabalkansky Avenue began. They must have moved to 120 Nevsky Avenue by New Year's Eve 1909. And it is highly likely that Alissa and her parents were watching the parade in the Figure 3 image through their windows on the second floor.

Mortgage documents also contain floor plans from that time. Unfortunately, they do not have apartment numbers. However, we assume that the old numeration of apartments is preserved today. The floor plan of the Rosenbaum apartment remained unchanged from 1868 (TsGIA SPB 513/102/9215, 5) to 1909 (TsGIA SPB 515/4/3938, 6–7). The Rosenbaums paid the highest rent in the building for their apartment.

The family of Elizabeth (Elizaveta) Guzarchik, Alissa's maternal aunt, who was married to gynecologist Isaak Moiseevich Guzarchik, moved into this building at approximately the same time. Before that, the Guzarchiks lived on Zabalkansky Avenue, very close to the Rosenbaums (*Ves' Peterburg* 1909, III: 222). According to recollections, they moved into apartment 3, one floor above

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№№ квартир.	Звание и фамилия жильцов, съ показаніем числа комнатъ и службъ, равно условий найма (по контрактамъ или безъ оныхъ).	Годовая плата.	По которымъ время десяти хозяйныхъ поурисы.	ЗАМѢЧАНІЯ ОЦѢНОЧНОЙ КОММИССИИ.
K 19	Обыкновенъ торговль. Крестовый Александръ, 2 комнаты, по контракту.	1100р.	№101 Сентябрь 1908г.	720 720.
K 20	Новыйная слобода (расчищена) Шурецкий подданный Петро, 3 комнаты, по контракту.	1620р.	№20 Сентябрь 1908г.	1200 1200
K 21	Рембогераевъ. Крестовый Александръ, 4 комнаты, по контракту.	2000р.	№101 Сентябрь 1908г.	1500 1500
K 22	Портенный и др. Михайловичъ Александръ одна комната и кухня, по контракту.	900р.	№101 Сентябрь 1908г.	600 600
K 1	Антонковъ. Организована-продовольств Созенбаевъ, 7 комнатъ, кладовка, баня и кухня, по контракту на 12 летъ.		Контрактъ на 12 летъ №2000 Сентябрь 1908г. №101 Сентябрь 1908г. №2000 Сентябрь 1908г. 4.12.08	2300-2300.

6320.

Таб. 1. Гены и А. Владыковъ. Ситтерская, 11

Figure 4. Tenant list for the apartment building at 120 Nevsky Avenue, Saint Petersburg, 1908 (TsGIA SPB 515/1/232A, 92)

the Rosenbaums (Nikiforova and Kizilov 2020, 28). We have no precise evidence as to which apartment they occupied. This is of interest not only because of the close relations between the two families but also because it is thought that on their return from Crimea in 1921, the Rosenbaums lived for some time with the Guzarchiks in that apartment. The Rosenbaum apartment 1 was seized by the Bolsheviks and was given to other lodgers after the family's escape to Odessa and Crimea in 1918 (120–21).

Isaak Guzarchik, medical doctor and Alissa's uncle, is not mentioned in the 1908 tenant list of 120 Nevsky Avenue. Their family must have moved to that address later, in 1909. We have found that apartment 6, facing the square on the fourth floor, was rented by dentist Yuly Borisovich Brook (TsGIA SPB 515/1/232A, 94; *Ves' Peterburg* 1909, 722). We can see his sign on all building photos predating 1918 below the windows of the apartment on the fourth floor (Figure 3). We wondered: could it have been that he was occupying apartment 3 or 4 on the third floor above the Rosenbaums?

We have found no evidence from prerevolution years (before 1917) that the Guzarchik residence on 120 Nevsky was apartment 3. At the same time, there are several papers from the early 1920s in the archives: Alissa's cousin Vera Guzarchik's appeal in her university file (TsGA SPB R-7240/5/1169, 2) and a List of Taxpayers (TsGA SPB P-1963/180-2/4985, 2) both testify to the fact that the Guzarchiks lived in apartment 3. We know from Rand's recollections that their family stayed in the same apartment from 1909 until at least 1930; until 1918 they lived right above the Rosenbaums.

Barbara Branden mentioned in *The Passion of Ayn Rand* that in order to reach their apartment at 120 Nevsky Avenue in 1921, the Rosenbaums had to walk up "four flights of stone stairs to three tiny rooms and a minuscule kitchen" (Branden 1987, 40). Nevertheless, we think that it is much more likely that upon their return from Crimea in 1921 the Rosenbaums for some time lived in the Guzarchiks' apartment 3 on the *third* floor. Or at least they might have been legally registered there since Alissa brought a residence paper with the 120 October 25th Avenue (formerly Nevsky Avenue) address of her permanent residence upon entering the university, without an apartment number though (TsGA R-7240/5/3576, 6; see Figure 5).

Here is the translation of the residence paper:

Extract from Occupants List of the h[ouse] no. 120

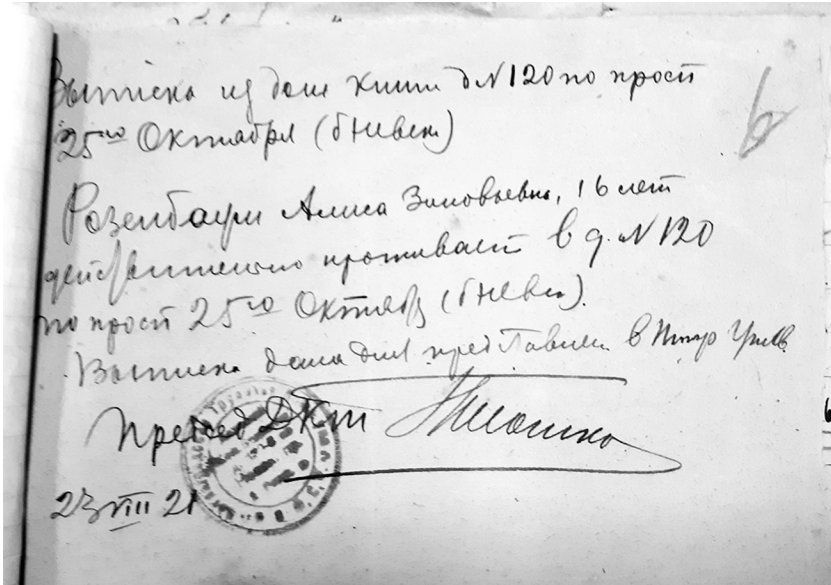
October 25th Avenue (f[ormerly] Nevsky)

Rosenbaum Alissa Zinovievna, 16 years old

really lives in the h[ouse] no. 120

October 25th Avenue (f[ormerly] Nevsky)

The extract is given for presentation at the Petr[ograd] Univ[ersity].



**Figure 5.** Alissa Rosenbaum residence paper at 120 October 25th Avenue (formerly 120 Nevsky Avenue), 1921 (TsGA R-7240/5/3576, 6).

Chairm[an] of the DKT [House Committee] [Signature]  
23 August 1921 [G]

### 74 Nevsky Avenue: The Grandparents' Place

One can assume that Alissa's grandparents on her mother's side, Berko Itskovich (Boris/Borukh Isaakovich) Kaplan and his wife Sarah, accorded much assistance to their daughters. Boris Kaplan was a popular and elite military uniform tailor. Saint Petersburg was the empire's capital and the tsars' residence. It was likewise the place where many elite guardsman troops were located. We know that Kaplan was wealthy enough to provide his family with modern gadgets such as a gramophone, almost at the first instance when they appeared in Russia (for more information about the Kaplans, see Nikiforova and Kizilov 2020, 22–23).

Boris Kaplan lived and worked in the apartment building at 74 Nevsky Avenue. Alissa, her sisters, and her cousins frequently visited their grandparents. All the information about Boris Kaplan's family and the location of their apartment was based on recollections and the *Whole Saint Petersburg* directory (*Ves' Peterburg* 1909, 1332, III: 340). However, we discovered an extant mortgage file for this apartment building. The earliest tenant list with building plans goes back to 1893, while the latest dates to 1900. The fifth line of page 57 (TsGIA SPB 515/1/3534, 57) reads as follows:



[in pencil on the right margin] 3 [floor] [apartment] 7/8

Apartment Number: 5/6

Tenant's Rank & Last Name, With Number of Rooms and Rent Details  
(with contract or not): as previous [tradesman] Kaplan Store Tailor 15  
[rooms] 1 [ancillary] [rent detail] as previous [conditions]

Annual Fee: 3,500 [rubles]

Payment Received Until: as previous [1 March 1893 [J]]

Evaluation Commission Remarks: [accepted as] 2,800 3,200 [in red]

One can see the united apartments 7 and 8 on the third-floor plan (TsGIA SPB 515/4/3914, 22). This joined apartment occupied the whole floor in that part of the building facing Nevsky Avenue, the main street of the city. The third floor is the one with the highest ceilings (TsGIA 513/102/4319, 37). Thus, one can assume that this accommodation was the most luxurious in the house. A tailor's business constituted part of it. One can see a large sign for Boris Kaplan's shop above the third-floor windows along the Nevsky Avenue façade of the building in a photo predating 1914 (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Boris Kaplan's store sign, 74 Nevsky Avenue, Saint Petersburg, before 1914. Photo credit: Ayn Rand Archives.



The grandparents' apartment was really large and had the highest rent in the building, like the Rosenbaums'. This fact gives us grounds to suppose that Boris (Berko) Kaplan must have been a talented tailor with a superb clientele.

It is also worthwhile to add that a tombstone, which mentions the names of both Alissa's grandparents, was discovered by Mikhail Kravtsov in the Jewish part of the Preobrazhenskoe (Преображенское) cemetery in Saint Petersburg (grave 504, plot 2/6 of the old part of the cemetery, between Main and Green streets; see Figure 7).

Its text reads as follows (in the English translation):

Sarra Abramovna  
 d.[ied] on 20 June 1918  
 Boris Isaakovich  
 KAPLAN  
 d.[ied] on 8 June 1930

### 16 Dmitrovsky Lane: Alissa's Last Abode before Emigration to America

It was known that in 1922 the Rosenbaums moved to a new apartment located at 16 Dmitrovsky Lane. However, the reasons for this relocation remained



**Figure 7.** Tombstone of Boris and Sarah Kaplan. Photo by Mikhail Kravtsov (2019).

unknown (Nikiforova and Kizilov 2020, 144). It is only now, after research in the archives, that we have uncovered information showing that the family moved to Dmitrovsky Lane because, right before the Russian Revolution of 1917, Alissa's father Zinovy bought that building. The building was "nationalized" (that is, confiscated) by the Bolsheviks in August 1918 according to Government Bureau Decree (Presidium VTsIK 1918). However, our discovery of new archival documents allows us to suppose that upon their return from Crimea in 1921, the Rosenbaums managed to get a part of an apartment in their former building.

New evidence that provides detailed information about the residences where Rand lived in Saint Petersburg was found during our study of mortgage contract documentation and the lists of occupants and taxpayers who lived at 16 Dmitrovsky Lane after the revolution. We have discovered two groups of documents related to the apartment on Dmitrovsky Lane. The first of them is related to the purchase of the building by Zinovy Rosenbaum, which was found by Mikhail Kravtsov in the mortgage file. The second group of the documents provides new details regarding the circumstances of the Rosenbaums living in apartment 5 at 16 Dmitrovsky Lane from 1922.

There are several documents about the purchase of the building in the mortgage file. A remortgage had to be executed after Zinovy Rosenbaum purchased the building. Some texts are rather large and formal. Therefore, we publish the most interesting of them—a sale notice in the mortgage file (TsGIA SPB 515/1/1245A, 84; Figure 8).

The notice states the following:

File no. 1131

According to the Bill of Sale appr[oved] by Sn. Notary  
 on 7 September 1916 [J],  
 premises that belonged to the State Counselor  
 Constantin Felitsinovich Lenkshevich  
 located in Moskovskaya district 1 plot numbers 69/148  
 in Dmitrovsky Lane  
 police [street number] 16, passed into possession of pharmacist  
 Zalman Vulf Zakharovich  
 Rosenbaum  
 [stamp at the left]  
 [vertical] Written Down in  
 [horizontal] Files Register [signature]  
 [unclear, department]  
 Address Register  
 Insurance Department [signature]  
 Accounting [signature] [end of stamp]

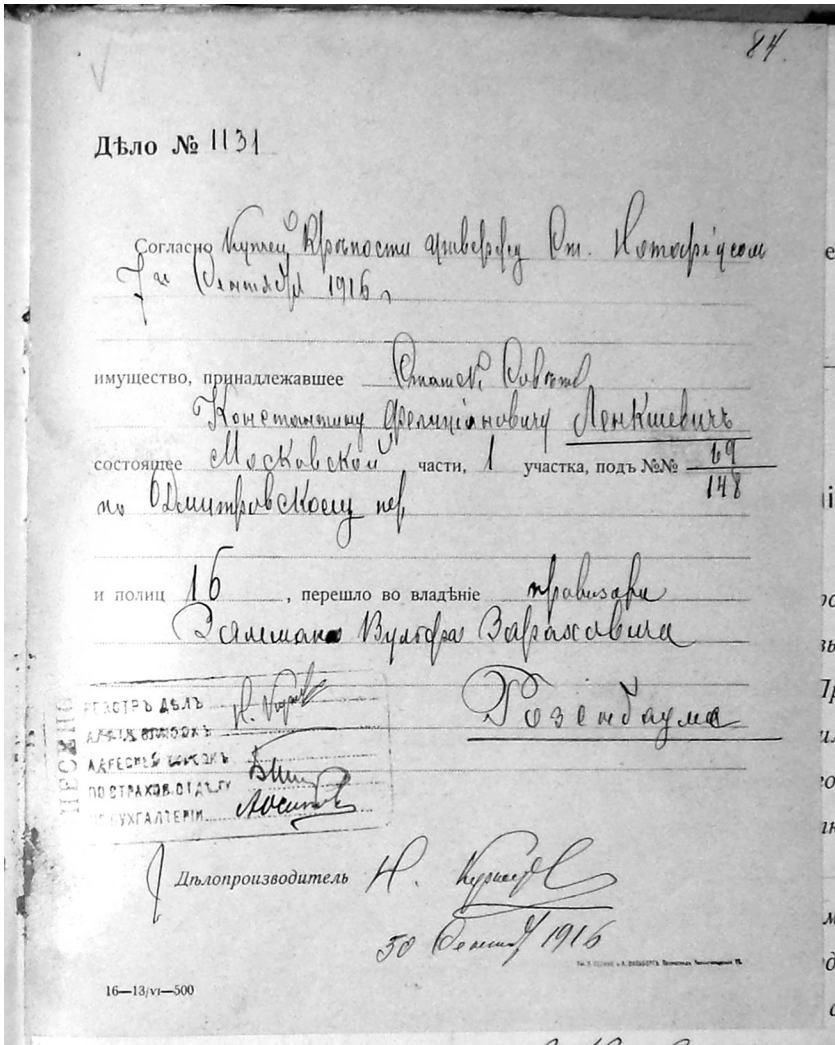


Figure 8. Sale notice from 16 Dmitrovsky mortgage file, 1916 (TsGIA SPB 515/1/1245A, 84).

Clerk [signature]  
30 September 1916 [J]

The bill of sale was signed by the parties on 23 August 1916 [J], as we can see in its copy (TsGIA SPB 515/1/1245A, 95). The bill of sale copy is a three-page typewritten document composed in the dry official language of the time. Other sale documents in the mortgage file are insurance contracts and additional loan documents, including the remortgage itself.

According to the archival documents, the Rosenbaums moved to apartment 5 at 16 Dmitrovsky Lane in August 1922. We are not sure if their Kaplan relatives lived in that apartment from 1918 to 1921 and thus preserved it or if it was only with the help of a bribe that Zinovy managed to get the apartment in 1922. It seems highly likely that the Kaplans did live there because we find Alissa's uncle Boris Kaplan living in the same apartment with the Rosenbaums from 1923 to 1924 (*Ves' Leningrad* 1924, III: 117). Soviet laws certainly did not give any right to the former "bourgeois" owner to reappropriate the building he once had possessed. General practice was that people who possessed the premises and lived on them were not removed (unless they were arrested or killed). They kept their residence or part of it or at least received a smaller apartment in the same building. But if owners were not living on their premises for a long time between 1917 and 1920, during the time of the Civil War, they could hardly claim any rights to their former possessions, which were by that time normally occupied by proletarians, soldiers, party members, and such.

We knew that the apartment in question was number 5 not only from Ayn Rand's and her relatives' recollections and interviews. The Ayn Rand Archives hold the residence paper that Alissa had with her on her way to America, which indicated the apartment number; this number is likewise mentioned in her correspondence with the family remaining in the Soviet Union.

The Rosenbaums' relocation is registered in the Citizens Registration House Book on 20 August 1922 [G] (TsGA SPB 7965/118/721, 185). It is interesting that parents are mentioned to have come from different locations (but on the same date): in Anna's entry her prior occupation was Strelina in the Leningrad region, and Zinovy is said to have moved from 13 Stremyannaya Street close by. Therefore, this question remains an unsolved mystery. It is very likely that the Rosenbaums lived from 1921 to 1922 at 120 Nevsky Avenue without official registration, having bribed a local official to let them live there. Perhaps in order to get registered at 16 Dmitrovsky Lane they had to "purchase" such previous registration papers as they could find.

The house book for 16 Dmitrovsky Lane was started in 1933—and this is why in 1922, when the city was called Petrograd, the region was mistakenly called Leningrad on the document. The people who lived in apartment 5, but who left before 1933, were not mentioned in the house book at all. Alissa Rosenbaum herself is not mentioned there (she left in 1926), while her sisters Nataliya and Eleonora are listed, along with their husbands. They all lived at Dmitrovsky 16 in apartment 5 after Alissa left for the United States.

We have already mentioned that Alissa's uncle Vladimir Kaplan apparently lived in the same apartment 5; his name is mentioned in the *Whole Petrograd* directory with the same phone number as Anna Rosenbaum (*Ves' Leningrad* 1924, III: 117). Vladimir must have lived there for a very short period of time;

his name is absent not only from the house book but also from the lists of taxpayers for 1926 and 1927. On the list for 1926, one can find the names of Alissa Rosenbaum, her grandfather Boris Kaplan, and Leonid Kongeim with Anna and Zinovy Rosenbaum living in this apartment (minor kids not being taxpayers) (TsGA SPB P-1963/180-2/6442, 561). According to the 1927 list, Alissa left; at the same time, Dobrulia Kongeim and the Notkins couple are mentioned as living in the Rosenbaum apartment 5 (TsGA SPB P-1963/180-2/4440, 258).

It should be noted that, on the one hand, Rand's complaints about her life in a crowded apartment in the house her father had once possessed are quite understandable. On the other, the Rosenbaums' living conditions at Dmitrovsky 16 were objectively much better than those of an average inhabitant of Saint Petersburg in the 1920s. The Rosenbaums lived with close relatives in a relatively large apartment. A common accommodation in Leningrad before the war, the so-called *kommunalka* (a communal apartment), usually consisted of a single room for a family, with children, parents, and sometimes even grandparents living together. Several such rooms, joined by a corridor, had to share a common kitchen, bathroom, and water closet.

At the time when the Rosenbaums lived there the apartment was approximately 2,190 square feet (203,5 m<sup>2</sup>). The 1908 tenant list gives the following description of apartment 5 (TsGIA SPB 515/1/1245A, 15): "5 rooms, a bathroom, 2 lobbies, a servant's room, 2 water closets, a kitchen." Several rooms in apartment 5 faced the courtyard; Alissa lived there with her family from 1921 to 1926. It was from that place that she embarked on a long and difficult journey to America in 1926. Alissa's family lived there at least until the end of the 1930s, when Alissa—then already Ayn Rand—interrupted her correspondence with the family for fear that they would be arrested by the NKVD for that (Nikiforova and Kizilov 2020, 208–14).

The building at 16 Dmitrovsky Lane was partly destroyed during the siege of Leningrad in World War II. The façade survived, but both courtyard wings were lost during the postwar reconstruction. The plan of the second floor of 1907 from the mortgage file (TsGIA SPB 515/4/1146, 16) locates roughly one-half of apartment 5 in that part of the building along the lane with six façade windows, and the second half in the right courtyard outbuilding. The wing part disappeared; the rest of apartment 5 seems to be in its historical place.

## Conclusion

As has been demonstrated here, until the publication of this research, scholars and admirers of Ayn Rand's talent have not possessed enough information about her residences in Saint Petersburg (Petrograd/Leningrad). The only data



available informed us about the apartments at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue, 120 Nevsky Avenue, and 16 Dmitrovsky Lane—residences where the Rosenbaums lived from 1905 through the 1930s, with an interruption for the 1918–21 period when the family was in Odessa and Crimea. Previous students of Rand’s biography could not locate the precise apartments in the aforementioned buildings where the Rosenbaums lived. They did not consult such pivotal documents as the tenant lists, house books, mortgage contracts, bills of sale, and so forth. The same caveat applies to the places of living of the Kongeim and Guzarchik families who were closely related to the Rosenbaums. Previous scholars also possessed no information regarding the residences of the Kaplans, Rand’s grandparents, and the place of their burial.

All these vitally important data have now been presented and analyzed in our article. We uncovered the residences in which the Rosenbaums lived in Saint Petersburg and the periods during which these residences were occupied. From 1904 to 1909, they lived at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue in apartment 15, located on the second floor together with the Zabalkanskaya pharmacy where Zinovy Rosenbaum worked as a pharmacist; the pharmacy itself was located in apartment 14. There is no doubt that it was here that little Alissa Rosenbaum, the future Ayn Rand, was born.

We also concluded that Zinovy Rosenbaum worked simultaneously in two pharmacies located close to each other and both owned by their relatives, the Kongeims. Apparently, he worked as a daytime manager of Moskovskaya pharmacy at 7 Raz’ezzhaya Avenue and a nighttime pharmacist of Zabalkanskaya pharmacy located at 40 Zabalkansky Avenue (42 Moskovsky Avenue today).

From the beginning of 1909 to autumn 1918, the Rosenbaums lived in the large apartment 1 on the second floor at 120 Nevsky Avenue. In our opinion, their relatives, the Guzarchiks, lived on the third floor of the building in apartment 3, and not on the fourth floor as previously suggested. It is very likely that upon coming back to Saint Petersburg from Crimea in Autumn 1921 the Rosenbaums stayed with them in the same apartment.

Especially significant is new information that has come to light related to the Rosenbaums’ address at 16 Dmitrovsky Lane. No previous discussions have touched upon the reasons for the Rosenbaum family’s move to that address in 1922. We argue that this relocation to a new apartment was caused by two factors: (1) the living conditions at 120 Nevsky Avenue, where they had to share a small apartment with their relatives, were far from convenient; (2) the house at 16 Dmitrovsky Lane was not alien to the Rosenbaums. In September 1916, the house was purchased by Zinovy Rosenbaum. Obviously, as the former “bourgeois” owner of the building, Zinovy Rosenbaum had no rights to reclaim his property in Bolshevik Petrograd. However, it seems very likely that Vladimir Kongeim, one of their relatives, managed to keep possession of one



of the building's apartments, namely, number 5. That's why the Rosenbaums moved to this apartment in 1922. It was from here that Alissa Rosenbaum emigrated to America in 1926.

Furthermore, the article provides information about 74 Nevsky Avenue—the place where Alissa's grandparents, Berko Itskovich (Boris Isaakovich) Kaplan and his wife Sarah Abramovna, had been living. This place was likewise often visited by Alissa Rosenbaum and her parents. Additionally, we have published English translations and Russian originals of several important and hitherto unknown documents related to all the aforementioned locations.

Finally, we are happy to have discovered that all Saint Petersburg places related to Ayn Rand and her family survived the revolution, the Leningrad blockade of World War II, and the years under communism. They can be visited by future generations of Rand scholars and admirers.

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## NOTES

1. Our article contains several references to different files from Saint Petersburg State Archives. State archives in Russia normally file documents using the following system: "Fond/Opis/Delo" ("Collection/Register/File"). In order not to bother readers with lengthy transcribed Russian file names in the text, we decided to use in the references the system accepted in Russia. Numbers corresponding with the in-text index may be found in the references.

2. During her childhood Rand was called Dact Pervyi (Dact no. 1), apparently as a reference to pterodactyls, which were often mentioned in the book *The Lost World* by Arthur Conan Doyle. She was called this because of her interest in dinosaurs. In 1925–26, when Alissa was preparing herself for the relocation to America, her family called her Amerikanka, that is, "a female American" (Nikiforova and Kizilov 2020, 157).

3. A facsimile of this document was first published by Nikiforova and Kizilov 2020 (27).

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