

Sidonia Illes



This is a photo of me, taken in Satu Mare in 1955, after I had returned from Cernauti. I am in front of the house where my family lived. This I remember that there was a smaller fence, and that one could see into the garden, which was full of beautiful flowers. People in the street would stop and admire the garden, and say it was the most beautiful garden. The street we lived on in Satu Mare was called Regele Carol Street. The house was still there in 1955, when I went there, after I had come back from Transnistria. We rented it, we didn't own it. It was a house with a single floor, where there were about three dwellings. The landlady lived in the middle; she was Hungarian and we called her 'házi néni' [the mistress of the house], as it is appropriate to address an old woman. There was a corridor and a common courtyard. The toilet was in the courtyard; it was made of wood. We occupied a room and a kitchen, and we were four children - two boys and two girls. The interior was ordinary. There was no central heating, of course. We lacked fire wood, so we used to heat bricks and put bottles with hot water in bed and cover ourselves with a 'duna' [eiderdown]. In

the evening, we used a petroleum lamp for lighting. We would read by it. There was no electricity. There weren't many things on the walls, as religious Jews knew they were forbidden to worship other gods or any graven image. Some of us would sleep in the room, and some in the kitchen. We were rather poor indeed. My mother's relatives were more prosperous. We were the poorest in the family. We always had a hard time with the rent and the fire wood in Satu Mare. Our relatives had their own houses, so they were doing better than us. Water would be brought from the town; both at home and at our grandmother's, in Halmeu, it was the same situation. There was a man who would carry drinking water, whom everyone called 'the man who brings water.' He carried the water in cans. There was a well in our courtyard, but the water used for drinking and cooking was brought from a few streets away. There once used to be a fence and the garden had lots of flowers. At least this is how I remember it: a courtyard full of flowers and people stopping by the fence to look at the most beautiful garden in town.