

Eli Perahya At Saint Louis High School



This one was taken at Saint Louis High School in Istanbul in the 1920s. A classical class photo. I am sitting on the right end of the second row from the front. I was around 11-12 years old. I started my education in the elementary school of the Jewish community in Haydarpasha. Here boys and girls studied together, whereas the high schools I attended later were for boys only. Being a very good student I was able to skip certain classes. I attended elementary school for only three years instead of five. Thanks to the private French lessons with Ms. Ojeni Bivas, after taking a special examination I skipped certain classes and went directly to the 5th grade at Saint Louis High School and studied three more years there. My favorite subject was algebra, but there wasn't any lesson I specially disliked. I still remember the names of some of my class-mates: Albert Sevi, Victor Mortara, Jozef Alkahe, Salvator Behar, Dario Crespi, Pepo Menase, nick-named leblebi which means roasted chickpea, Pepo Treves, Devivi Luigi, Rasih, Maurice Barbut, etc. After that, I finished my last three years of education in the commercial department of the Saint Joseph High School before I started earning my living. Here I was also a good student. I still keep my school report cards and certificates. I remember our teacher of philosophy, nick-named 'the Philosopher', who asked us to write a dissertation on the Industrial Revolution in England. I was the best in our class and was marked 16 over 20. I still remember his words, 'this is the highest mark I've given to a student in my life,' which showed how meticulous he was on the level of the studies. I like to nick-name my educational life as a '3+3+3 educational system,' as I attended three classes at each level. Both Saint Louis and Saint Joseph were French schools founded by Les Freres des Ecoles Chrétiennes. They were prestigious educational institutions and numerous were the Muslim or Jewish parents who used to send their children to those Christian schools, so that they be well educated with a deep knowledge of the French language.