

Gutl Shapiro



This is my mother, Gutl Shapiro, photographed near our house in Korosten. The picture was taken on one of her birthdays in the early 1930s.

In early 1930 my mother's sister Sonia and her husband Joseph insisted that we moved to Korosten for the reason that life was more difficult in the village and besides, there was no place for us, children to continue our education. We couldn't make up our mind for some time - it was difficult to leave the house for Korosten where we had no place to live.

Joseph built a foundation of a house for us near his house and insisted that we moved. In fall 1930 our family moved to Korosten. At the beginning we lived in the house of Sonia and Joseph. By the summer of 1931 Joseph, my brother Jacob and Henry, my sister's husband completed the construction of our house.

There was a room for Bronia and her family in this house: she and her husband had children already. My brother and I had a room, there was also my mother's bedroom and a small dining-room. I went to a Russian secondary school in Korosten. There was a Jewish school in Korosten, but it would have been difficult for me to study there. We spoke Yiddish at home, but still I began my studies at a Ukrainian school.

Korosten was quite a big town - about fifty thousand people. The majority of the population was Jewish: Jews were shoemakers, carpenters, tailors, watchmakers, locksmiths, cabinetmakers, barbers. There were also Jewish teachers, doctors and musicians that played in the Jewish orchestra in the Cultural Center.

There was a big synagogue in Korosten and on Saturday my mother, Sonia and Joseph went there. On Jewish holidays our big family got together in Sonia's big house. My uncle Joseph conducted

seder.

As soon as we settled down in our big house my mother and sister took to sewing and my brother Jacob became an apprentice for a locksmith at the 'October forgery' plant. Our life was just beginning to improve when the period of famine began in 1932. We starved and suffered a lot.