

# The City Of Brandys Nad Labem, Where Helena Kovanicova Lived Before World War II



This postcard is from sometime during the period between the wars. It shows a row of houses on the Brandys main square, across from the town hall. On the right you can see a sign belonging to the 'Fuka' restaurant and hotel. The Lustigs lived in the house on the left, where they had the Alubra liquor factory. Further to the left is a smaller, dark house with lowered blinds. The people that lived in this house were also named the Lustigs, but they weren't in any way related to the ones that manufactured liquor. These Lustigs had a textile store. Somewhere in this row of houses was also Mr. Horeni's confectionery. I've always said that no one had better sweets than the Horenis.

Sometime around 1929 we moved to Brandys nad Labem. Before that we lived in Prague. In Brandys I started attending elementary school. Our house stood and still stands by the main road that leads to the town square. I remember that along on this road once came a delegation with the Romanian King Karol and Prince Michal, all the members of their delegation had beautiful uniforms.

Back then in Brandys there apparently was no organized Jewish community as such. Brandys didn't even have its own rabbi. Despite that, before the war I used to go for religion lessons to Mr. Rabbi Mandl, who used to commute to Brandys from Prague. The rabbi was very kind to all the children. The boys would misbehave, but he didn't care, and on top of it gave out candy. He taught us Hebrew and back then I quite liked it, because it seemed like drawing to me, and the rabbi was very pleased by that.

The synagogue in Brandys stands to this day. I remember that as a child I always liked that synagogue's ceiling, which was blue with stars, just like the sky. I remember that back then we children put on a little performance in the synagogue, we each had a candle in one hand and a flag in the other, and sang the song Maoz Tsur. At the end we'd get a bag of candy for it. It was during

the period before the Christian Christmas. My father attended synagogue every Friday, because the service could only start if at least ten people gathered. So they would always meet there on Friday, but I've got the feeling that they more likely sat and told each other jokes there. Most likely it wasn't any sort of strict or official ceremony. As far as I know, there was never anyone completely Orthodox in Brandys.