

Matilda Albuhaire's Mother Rebecca Albuhaire



This is my mother Rebecca Albuhaire with my brother Jack and me. The photo was taken in Bourgas around 1917. My mother was born in Plovdiv in 1890. She was illiterate. She had never worked. She had been a housewife since she got married. I can't remember how my parents met. Somebody did the match-making, because my father was a very introverted and modest person. I think they got married in Bourgas, probably in the synagogue. In those times everybody got married only in the synagogue. There was no other kind of marriage. My mother was very elegant; she used to wear a hat. My brother Jack was born in Bourgas in 1914. I was born in Plovdiv in July 1916. My mother went to Plovdiv to give birth to me because my grandma, my father's mother, had been very ill and there was nobody to help her. I was born a year and a half after my elder brother Jack. He was born in Bourgas. I don't remember my early years. I only remember a story:

my mother, in order to be able to watch us both, used to tie him to the window with a cloth while leaving me in the baby carriage. One day, while I was yawning he dropped a small key in my mouth. I took a lot of efforts to save myself. We lived in Bourgas. There were many Jews in Bourgas, but I can't tell exactly how many. Jews were mainly engaged in trading. There were some dairymen, too, and the poor Jews were stevedores and baked seed sellers. There was a very beautiful synagogue in Bourgas - only one, a Sephardi one. There were only two Ashkenazi families. There was also a shochet and a rabbi. We lived in a two-story house. The kitchen and the guest room were on the first floor, and on the second floor were the bedrooms. My grandpa, my elder brother and I used to sleep in one bedroom, and my parents and my younger brother in the other bedroom. In the mornings, when we went downstairs to go to school, grandpa had already lit the stove, the kettle was boiling and it was always warm. Otherwise there was no heating upstairs because it was not so cold in Bourgas. The house was next to the Turkish bath and on Fridays my mother and I used to go there. Bulgarians and Greeks lived next to us; on the right side was the Armenian priest with his son, and the bath itself belonged to a Turk. The house we bought belonged to a Turk, and before we bought it, we lived on the opposite side of the street in a Bulgarian house with a family, whose name was Ochidolovi. We used to call the mother in that family 'mummy', because we grew up there. At some stage my mother was very ill, and we kept on asking 'mummy' to come and see her. They used to help us a lot.