

Basia Breizman



This is my mother Basia Breizman (nee Benderskaya). The photo was taken in Zhytomyr in 1938. When my maternal grandmother fell ill with tuberculosis they decided to have my mother married off as soon as possible so that she didn't have to depend on her relatives in case her mother died. This was in 1921. My grandmother turned to shadkhanim, matchmakers, that offered her to have my mother marry my future father. My grandmother called my mother to come to Zhytomyr where she announced that my mother was to meet a man. My mother met my father. They liked each other. My mother was a quiet, shy and pretty girl. My father was twelve years older. My mother didn't want to marry him. She cried and begged her mother to let her be, but my grandmother insisted that my mother obeyed her. My father was a decent man and had a profession. They got engaged and my mother stayed in Zhytomyr. They had a traditional Jewish wedding about a month later. My father found a facility that he wanted to rent for his clock shop, but it turned out to be cold and wasn't appropriate for work. Besides, my father would have had to pay taxes on it. He went to work at another clock shop. He was very skillful and had a lot of work to do. When he returned home from work he continued working. He got orders from owners of clock shops that had

nice facilities with fancy signboards, but they couldn't do the work. Those owners paid my father 50% of the cost of their orders. My father was a strong man, but the fact that he had to sit all the time had an impact on his health condition. My mother was a housewife. My father wanted to provide for the family and thought that he could afford to have my mother take care of the house and family. We spoke Russian at home. My father and mother spoke Yiddish sometimes, but they only communicated in Russian with my brother and me.