

Matilda Ilel



This is a photo of my mother Matilda Ilel, nee Mitrani, as a young woman. The photo was taken in the 1910s, probably in Xanthi or Dedeagac. She wasn't married yet. My mother, my father's second wife, arrived in Bulgaria from Greece with her parents, probably in 1912 or 1913. My mother's family lived in a number of places. My mother told me that they lived in Xanthi and Dedeagac. They lived in Turkey and after the First Balkan War they lived in Greece. My mother could speak Greek and Turkish very well. She also knew Bulgarian, but not very well. She learned it when they moved to Vidin. Her father was a chazzan. Her parents educated their children well.

Their son Solomon and their daughter with her husband Bentsion remained in Greece, while they came to Bulgaria with my mother, who was already 25 years old. They married her to my father, who was 25 years older than her. She arrived with one chest. We had that chest for many years at home. She kept her most valuable things there and a dress called 'bindali,' an ancient Jewish national velvet dress sewn with gold threads. I don't know if she came with that dress or if my father gave it to her as a present when she gave birth to my brother Santo. There was a tradition to give nice presents to women who had given birth to boys. My mother was a workaholic. She couldn't sit doing nothing. She could knit and embroider with a needle. In her free time she attended to her flowers. She loved flowers very much. Her favorite flower was the dahlia.