

## Max Shykler



This is a picture of me when I was a pupil of the 4th grade at the Romanian grammar school in Vizhnitsa. The photo was taken in Vizhnitsa in 1934. In 1931 I moved to Vizhnitsa and went to the grammar school there. My parents, my brother and my sister stayed in Putila. I lived with my mother's cousin. There was a fee to pay for education at the grammar school. However, only a few students paid. When a student submitted a certificate issued by the village council saying that his family was poor, he was exempt from payment. Almost all students obtained such certificates. This was a Romanian grammar school. All subjects were taught in Romanian. Romanian was the official language of the state, and we all spoke it. All teaching was in Romanian since 1918. We studied foreign languages: German, French and Latin. We had classes in general subjects such as physics, chemistry, literature, history and geography. We also had religious classes: Jewish and Christian children studied separately. There were many Jewish children at school, as there were quite a few

Jewish families in Vizhnitsa and the surrounding villages. I also continued to study Jewish traditions, prayers, Hebrew and Yiddish, and the Talmud at cheder. I finished grammar school in Vizhnitsa in 1934. I wanted to complete my lower secondary education at grammar school. I moved to Chernovtsy and went to grammar school there. I lived with my mother's sister. I forgot her first name, but her married name was Gaber. They had a small house in the center of town. My aunt and her husband had four children: two sons and two daughters. They were all 5-10 years older than me. By the time I came to Chernovtsy they were adults, had left their parents' home and had their own families. Only one of my cousins was still living with her parents, but she got married and moved out soon. They had a brick house with three rooms and a kitchen. There was a small yard, but they didn't keep any livestock. They had no gas. There was running water and a toilet in the house. My aunt's family celebrated all Jewish holidays and Sabbath. The population of Chernovtsy was 105,000 people; about 65,000 of them were Jews. There were about 60 synagogues in Chernovtsy. All Jews went to synagogue regardless of their level of religiosity. Purim was a real carnival in Chernovtsy. Everybody wore a mask and people laughed, danced and enjoyed themselves. There were Purimshpils in Chernovtsy organized by the Jewish theater. On this day the whole town became a stage. People installed stages in the streets and in the squares, and everywhere professional and amateur actors performed Purimshpil performances.