

Ester Kleinstein



This is my mother Ester Kleinstein, nee Solomina, in the orchard of her parents' house in Pilviskiai. This picture was taken in the late 1920s. My mother was born in 1901 in accordance with the documents, though she always used to say that she was born in 1905. Maybe it was her desire to

appear younger. My mother was born in Pilviskiai. I don't know which elementary school she went to. With the outbreak of World War I, my maternal grandparents decided to leave the town temporarily, fearing the status of a frontier town. They went to a Russian city: Voronezh. It was a large cultural Russian city, where the family of Jacob Solomin had lived for several years. There my mother entered and finished a Russian lyceum. Owing to the opportunity of living and studying in Voronezh with Russian girls, my mother was fluent in Russian, and she was fond of classic literature. She was good at foreign languages. When she returned to Vilkauskis, she taught German at the local lyceum for a while. It was likely that my mother had known my father, Moses Kleinstein, since adolescence. My father's family had also moved to Voronezh from Vilkauskis with the outbreak of World War I. They got married in 1923. I don't think it was a pre-arranged marriage, which was customary with Jews. My mother said that my father had been wooing her for a long time, but she was rather picky. Ester was very beautiful and popular with young men. Despite the fact that both of them weren't religious, the wedding was in accordance with the Jewish traditions. My parents got married under a chuppah in a large synagogue in Vilkauskis.