

Herman Beitner



This is a studio portrait of my father, Herman Beitner. It was taken in the 1920s in Magdeburg, but I don't know exactly when and in what studio.

Father was calm, he was good, not talkative, very liberal towards his children, towards the world. He had blond hair, blue eyes. He had a very friendly face. He wore a suit.

After the wedding my parents went to Magdeburg. There was a painful economic crisis in Poland and that's why Father went to Germany looking for work. I think it must have been 1920. He worked at his sister's store.

She had a shoe store. Her name was Ida Oppenheim, her husband, Natan Oppenheim, was, I think, a German Jew. Or maybe he was from Poland? I don't know where they met, but I do know they only spoke German to each other.

They were more progressive, reformed. We were both born in Magdeburg: my brother Natan and I.

When I was two years old my parents returned to Poland. We went to Katowice. That's where my two sisters were born, Zosia and Jadzia. In Katowice, Father was a real estate manager.

Private owners would ask him to manage their tenement houses. Probably at first Father was only managing one or two houses, for example the building at 10 Slowackiego Street, which belonged to my father's brothers Tobiasz and Chaim.

Later the owners started trusting him more and all in all he had 14 buildings in his care.