

The Lower Market In Bodzentyn



This is the Lower Market in my home town, Bodzentyn. I took this photo during my trip to Bodzentyn after World War II, in 1957.

I was hiding first, after I arrived. I didn't want to say that I was a Jew, because I was afraid. I went to Bodzentyn, because I had a house there. We had lived on Pasięka Street, next to the Lower Market. I was thinking of getting the house back, but I didn't. There was this old woman living there. I didn't want to move her, so I decided to leave the house alone. I came back to get the birth certificates, all the documents that everyone's dead, death certificates and all that.

Bodzentyn was a very small town in the Swietokrzyskie Mountains. There were several hundred Jews living there [approx. 1,000 Jews, about two percent of the total population]. Artisans, merchants - the entire downtown was Jewish. Jews and Poles lived together in the city and the relationships between them were very good. There were more Poles. The Jews were progressive, but mostly practiced religion - the older ones at least; the younger were starting to assimilate a bit. When you walked on the street without wearing a cap, you stood out at once. There was an elementary school in Bodzentyn - a Polish one, I attended it as well - a teachers' training college, a prayer house and a mikveh. The owner of the mikveh was called Binsztok. The mikveh was on Kielecka Street. The prayer house was next to the Catholic church, on Boznicza Street. And there was also a cemetery, on a hill. When I went to Bodzentyn right after the war, this Jewish cemetery was still there, but all the mazelot had been destroyed.