

The House Of Natan W. In Chmelov



This is my grandfather Natan W. 's house in Chmelov. The photo was taken in 1935.

Grandpa Natan W. was from Jaslo. Today, if I'm not mistaken, Jaslo is in Poland, or the Ukraine, I don't know, I haven't looked into it [Jaslo: a town in Poland - Editor's note]. That was during the time of Austro-Hungary, and how he got to the territory of today's Slovakia, I don't know. I as well don't even know how he met his wife. My father was already born on the territory of today's Slovakia, in the village of Orlik [Orlik - Presov region], not far from the town of Svidnik [Presov region]. But later my grandparents moved to the town of Chmelov [Presov region], which is about 80 kilometers east of Presov.

My grandfather was an Orthodox Jew. He had a beard, but as opposed to some that don't take very good care of their beards, he cultivated it. He looked very distinguished. Because he wanted to support his family, he went to find work in America and for some time lived in Chicago. He had this back basket and there in that back basket he had buttons, drawstrings for pants and so on, and he sold these things. There were large slaughter houses in Chicago, and their owners wanted him, because he was Orthodox, to stamp the meat [Hechsher: authorization or permission confirming ritual cleanliness. The most familiar form of hechsher confirms that meat or other foods are prepared according to ritual regulations - Editor's note]. He turned it down, though, because he didn't trust those people. He didn't believe that they wouldn't foist off on him meat that hadn't been prepared in ritual fashion. He saved up some money in America, and returned to Chmelov, where he bought a little house. He also bought two cows and a small plot of land.

My grandfather had set up a prayer hall in the bedroom in his house. The ten people [minyan: a prayer minimum of ten men older than 13 - Editor's note] for prayers came from the towns of Radvanovce, Chmelov and Pusovce.