

Karel Chaim Werner



This is a photograph of my father, Karel Chaim Werner, taken at the Kolinsky studio in Nachod.

My father was born on 9th February 1890 in Poland, in Kopyczyńce. His cousins lived in Czechoslovakia, they invited him in the middle of the twenties, to come join them. He found work here, later in the 1930s when he met my mother, he settled here in Pardubice.

My father was a sales agent for the Kudrnac company, which manufactured various rubber products, and had its head office in Nachod. My father traveled by train around Slovakia, where he had his circuit and his clients, he visited individual shoemakers or small shops and sold them rubber heels and soles. He'd be away the whole week, he actually only returned on Sunday or Saturday and then left again. My father had the 'traveling salesman's disease': he was a gambler. Most traveling salesmen played cards, because when they arrived in a strange town, where they had no family, the only thing that was left to do was to get together and play cards. I remember that as soon as my father came home from his travels, the whole gang would get together in a pub or café, and play the card game Marias. He had this notebook, in which he would record how much he had won and how much he had lost. I think that in this respect my mother had a lot of problems with him. He was likely quite well-known as a card player in Pardubice, because people used to call my sister and me 'the soroklings' - from the Russian word sorok, which means forty - which is a term used in Marias.