

Chmielnik

Located at the crossing of the Staszów – Jędrzejów and Kielce – Tarnów roads, Chmielnik has a synagogue and two Jewish cemeteries: they testify to the wealth and importance of the former Jewish community of Chmielnik.

The synagogue was erected (ca 1634) north of the market square, in the center of the Jewish district. Nothing is left of the original synagogue furnishings because the building was destroyed by fire in the 19th century. During the reconstruction works the prayer hall was provided with a four-section ceiling with geometric stucco decorations. During the wartime, Germans added a wooden ceiling to the prayer hall, removed furnishings and dismantled the balustrade of the section for women.

The older cemetery of the Chmielnik Jewish community was established in the medieval times and located near the northern wall of the synagogue. By the order of the 19th century authorities Jews had to stop using that cemetery for burials. A new necropolis was opened in 1820. It was nearly completely devastated by the Nazis during WWII. The area was re-arranged and fenced in 2008: Rescued tombstones were returned to the cemetery and put upright, and a monument in shape of a lapidarium was constructed of the broken tombstones in the cemetery corner.

The Meetings with the Jewish Culture festival in Chmielnik has become an annual event. It features such attractions as an art exhibition (paintings), music recitals, film projections, dances, and a promotion of Jewish cuisine dishes.

Tourist Information Center in Chmielnik
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www.chmielnik.com

Szydłów

The town is situated on the Szydłów Plateau, some 52 kilometers from Kielce. The plateau is a transitional land formation located between the Świętokrzyskie Mountains and the Połaniec Basin. The Jewish community of Szydłów contributed much to the development of the town and its environs.

Already in 1494 the local Jews were granted a privilege to sell alcoholic drinks, which later on was extended to the production of beer, vodka and other articles of that kind.

Within the city walls and not far away from the market square stands a well-preserved building of the Renaissance synagogue. Its thick stone walls (2 m) were provided with buttresses and the synagogue could also play defensive functions. A simple attic embellishes the building, in contrast with the wooden outbuilding covered with a shingle roof. The outbuilding housed the section for women on the upper level. Of great value is the well-preserved and elaborately sculpted Aron-ha-kodesh, where the Torah was kept.

At present, the synagogue building shelters a gallery of modern art: the local artists present mostly the historical building and panoramic views of Szydłów. There is also an exhibition of items representing Jewish religion and culture, for example, two pieces of Torah scroll, four-meter-tall figure of Moses holding Decalogue tablets, and 18 bronze bas-reliefs featuring scenes from the Old Testament by professor Gustaw Zemła.

Like Chmielnik, Szydłów hosts Jewish culture events that evoke great interest. They include outdoor exhibitions, music concerts and meetings with poetry.

Tourist Information Center in Szydłów
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Pińczów

The town of Pińczów is located upon River Nida, 39 kilometers from Kielce. It was one of the most important centers of Jewish life in the Małopolska region.

First Jewish settlers came to Pińczów in the late 16th century. Towards the end of the same century, a kahal came into existence. Soon Jews were granted more privileges and a permission to build a synagogue came in 1594. The owner of the town, Zygmunt Myszkowski, agreed for the construction of three synagogues: two were made of brick and one was constructed of wood. Those were followed by Jewish schools, libraries and printing houses. Trade, crafts and printing were the main sectors of Jewish activities. Jews lived near the market square and in the south-eastern part of the town.

In 1856, Jewish population of Pińczów reached 70 % of the total. Pińczów economy continued to develop mainly due to the contribution of Jewish capital. The investments included such important industrial ventures as the textile factory of Rosenberg and a factory of cotton fabric and dye-works of Berenstein. Three and half thousand Jews lived in Pińczów on the eve of WWII.

There is no Jews in Pińczów today. Three thousand of them were deported by the Nazis to the death camp of Treblinka in October 1942. Szapsia Rapaport was the last rabbi of the Pińczów community. The synagogue was destroyed by the Germans in 1942.

There were three Jewish cemeteries in Pińczów. The first one (1592) was located outside the city walls, close to the Nida River. The second one was arranged in the early 17th century, and the third one in the late 18th century. The two latter ones are now built over areas. The last burial took place in Pińczów in 1942. Saved tombstones were placed near the restored synagogue building in 1990.

The synagogue in Pińczów is one of the oldest preserved monuments of Jewish culture in Poland. It was constructed on rectangular plan at the turn of the 16th century and acquired Renaissance style appearance. Elements of stucco decorations, Hebrew inscriptions and fragment of murals are preserved on the synagogue vault.

Tourist Information Center in Pińczów
Regional Museum in Pińczów
ul. Piłsudskiego 2a, 28-400 Pińczów
tel. +4841 357 24 72
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Bodzentyn

The town of Bodzentyn upon River Psarka, a tributary of River Kamienna, is located in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, at the foot of Klonowskie Range.

Bodzentyn had a sizable Jewish community. In the mid-19th century, Jews of Bodzentyn belonged to the synagogue district of Szydłowiec and buried their dead there. However, in 1866, the Jewish residents of Bodzentyn managed to obtain a permit to build a cemetery in their own town. The plot of land known as Krakowiec was provided for free by the county authorities. The cemetery was fenced in the early 20th century, and in 1933 the community bought more land to enlarge its area. The last burial took place in 1942. After the liquidation of the ghetto, the Germans devastated the kirkut. About 80 tombstones from the years 1870-1934 are preserved on the area of approximately 5 acres. Many of them retained their rich ornaments and Hebrew inscriptions, some still have fragments of multicolor decorations.

The mother of writer Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, Dorota Herling-Grudzińska, born Bryczkowska, was buried in the Bodzentyn cemetery.

There is also a synagogue in Bodzentyn. The wooden synagogue built in the late 19th century was destroyed by fire in 1917. It was rebuilt in the years 1927-29, but bricks were used that time, although the roof was still covered with shingles. It was demolished during WWII. During the German occupation Jews from the nearby villages were brought to the Bodzentyn ghetto. In October 1942 all 700 Jewish residents of Bodzentyn were deported the death cam of Treblinka.

The Diary of Dawid Rubinowicz is an invaluable evidence of the fate of hundreds of thousands of Jewish children who were not to ever reach an adulthood. It is often put next to the worldwide famous diary of Dutch Jewish girl Anna Frank, also the victim of the Holocaust. Dawid Rubinowicz lived in Krajno near Bodzentyn. When the war started, he came to live in the Bodzentyn ghetto (ul. Kielecka 13). He was 12 years old at that time and never lived to see the end of the war – he was also deported to the death camp of Treblinka. He started his notes on 21 March 1940, and the last lines were written on 1 June 1942. The Diary of Dawid Rubinowicz was translated into many languages.

INFORMACJE PRACYCZNE:
Dawid Rubinowicz Society
tel. +48 519 165 300
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www.bodzentyn.ugm.pl



Jewish cemetery in Chmielnik



Synagogue in Szydłów



Synagogue interior in Pińczów



Kirkut in Bodzentyn



Synagogue interior in Chmielnik

Starachowice

The city of Starachowice is located in the Kamienna River valley, some 30 km from Kielce. It is surrounded by vast forests, remains of the former Świętokrzyska Primeval Forest.

In spite of the fact that Jews were officially not allowed to settle in Starachowice, they lived there already in the end of the 18th century and were subordinated to the kahal in Iłża. They erected a synagogue in 1905, and were granted a privilege of establishing an independent community in 1907. The majority of Starachowice Jews were deported by the Nazis to Treblinka death camp in 1942. The remaining members of the community were turned into slave-laborers working in the armament factory in Starachowice, but eventually they were all deported by the Germans to the extermination camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944.

The Jewish cemetery, or kirkut, established in 1891, is situated in ul. Podgórze. It occupies an area of an acre and contains approximately 200 tombstones.

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Ożarów

Situated in the eastern part of the Świętokrzyskie voivodeship, Ożarów (Opatów county) sits some 15 kilometers west from the Vistula.

For a few centuries Jews constituted 2/3 of the Ożarów residents. The first records of their presence date back to 1616. In the 1930s, Jews occupied the central section of the town and busied themselves predominantly with trade and crafts.

There are few traces of Jewish existence still present in the town of Ożarów today. One of them is the synagogue ruined during WWII. It was used as a cinema for many years after the war. Now it houses a shop. There is a former Jewish cemetery in the outskirts of the town. Due to the project financed by the institution known as the Renovation of Jewish Cemeteries in Poland (PJCRP), it was rearranged and reopened in 2001. Many tombstones bear traditional Jewish symbols such as hands in gesture of blessing, books, lions, and hands with pitchers; tombstones for women were decorated with broken candles or trees, and sometimes with a hand dropping a coin into an elm-box. The cemetery is the only remaining material evidence of the Jewish existence in Ożarów, beginning in the 17th century and ending tragically in 1942. The Ożarów ghetto was filled by Jews from all over Poland, and even from Austria. They were all deported by the Nazis to the Treblinka death camp in the summer of 1942.

Practical Information
www.ozarow.pl

Działoszyce

Few records of the Jewish presence in Działoszyce have survived till the present time. There are still ruins of the kahal house and of the synagogue erected in 1852, once considered the most beautiful prayer house in Poland. There is no tombstones preserved in the former Jewish cemetery; only small boards placed on trees commemorate the former members of the Działoszyce Jewish community once buried in that cemetery.

Jews arrived to Działoszyce as early as during the reign of king Kazimierz III Wielki (14th c.). A so-called synagogue district functioned in Działoszyce and many smaller communities in the environs were its members.

The World War II put the end to the Jewish community of Działoszyce. The gestapo men came here from Miechów on 2 September 1942. All Działoszyce Jews (ca 10,000) were ordered to report to the town market square on the next day. Most of them were walked to the railway station and deported to the concentration camp in Płaszów near Kraków. Children, elderly people and sick persons (ca 1,500) were taken to the Jewish cemetery and mass-murdered by the Nazi troops on 3 September 1942.



Kirkut in Ożarów

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The film Hiding and Seeking by Menachem Daum was granted the Grand Prix of the "Jewish Motives" Film Festival. Its story is based on real events that took place in Bronowo near Działoszyce. Three Jews found a shelter in the barn of Honorata and Wojciech Mucha one year and a half before the end of WWII. Risking their own life, the couple protected, fed and supported morally the Jewish escapees during 18 months. Their farm was once searched by the Nazis, but fortunately did not find their hiding place located under a hay stack.

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Kirkut (Jewish cemetery) in Starachowice



Kirkut in Ożarów



Jewish cemetery in Działoszyce



**HIGHLIGHTS OF
THE ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKI
REGION**



JEWISH HERITAGE