

B'nai Gombin

Newsletter of the Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society



The Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society (GJHGS) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that seeks to educate the public about the history and genealogy of the Jews of Gombin. To achieve this goal, the GJHGS collects and publishes relevant materials, encourages historical and genealogical research, and undertakes activities aimed at preserving documents and relics of the culture and history of Jewish Gombin.

B'nai Gombin is the newsletter of the GJHGS. Everything published in *B'nai Gombin* is meant to provide information for Gombiners and their descendants. Articles, stories, poems, or other genres about Jewish genealogy, Poland, Gombin, or other subjects of interest to Gombiners submitted, may be published in *B'nai Gombin*. The views and opinions expressed in *B'nai Gombin* are not necessarily those of the Gombin Society. For further information, contact the Gombin Society by mail at 185 Skyline Drive, Highland Mills NY 10930 or by email.

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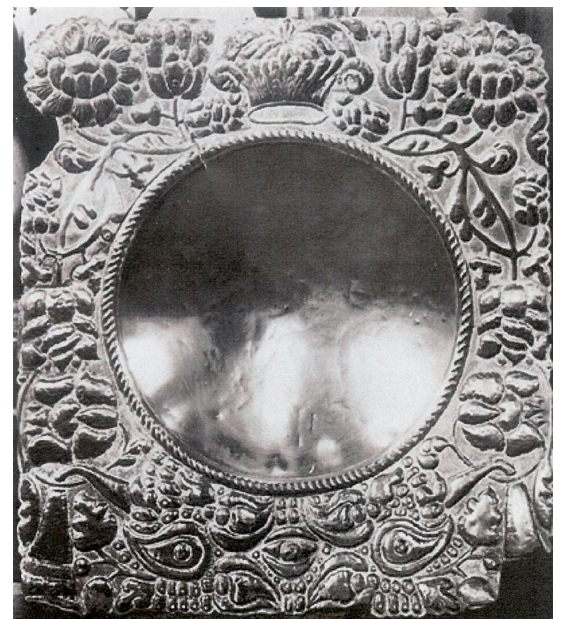
Reflections from the Gombin Synagogue

Dana Boll, New York

When Ada Holtzman posted a photo of a reflector from the Gombin Synagogue on the gombin-list, asking about its purpose, my curiosity would not rest, so I spent some time researching. I discovered that reflectors were used to enhance candlelight and allow for the possibility of evening prayer. This lovely description of the Gombin Synagogue comes from Gedaliah Shaiak's book, Force and Defiance:

"The synagogue was constructed in a Baroque style, with wings on the upper floor and two onion-shaped towers. The building had two entrances. Broad windows faced the street front. **When the lights in the synagogue were turned on for Sabbath or holidays, the copper reflectors and chandeliers threw back beams of light, illuminating the darkness outside.**" (pp162-63)

For me, this description profoundly enlivened the image of our synagogue—the beautiful sepia



toned photo that is so often used as the hallmark of our organization. Suddenly, I could imagine the building as it must have been at night shining in the darkness as a beacon of faith, community and belief.

Shaiak, Gedaliah. *Force and Defiance* [Gedaliah Shaiak] York Press, Abbotsford [Vic.] : 1982
Reflections from the Gombin Synagogue

Ada Wolfowicz Rakocz - Survival and Rescue

Ada Wolfowicz Rakocz was born in Gombin in 1928. Her parents were Mania and Marek Wolfowicz; her sister was Bella. She says that she is “the only survivor of Gombin’s ghetto.” Here is her own story:

When the Germans invaded Gombin, they immediately started to limit the Jewish activity. We were obliged to wear the Magen David symbol on the front and back of our clothes. We were instructed to bring all valuable stuff such as jewelry into the local police station. The Germans who lived outside of Gombin before the war were called “Folks Deutsch.” They came into the town and invaded the Jewish houses, throwing out the Jewish inhabitants of these houses.

The remaining Jewish population took care of new refugees. These events took place in early 1940. After that a new ghetto was created in Gombin, where all the Jewish community lived together.

I lived in this ghetto with my grandfather, Izhak Glatse, and grandmother, Leah Glatse. Three brothers of my mother, Leon, Mietek and Shaul, with their wives and children and

the sister of my mother, Anga Revzin, her husband Loleck, and her sons Yusek and Bella all lived in a small apartment.

A big church in Gombin was destroyed by bombs. A small group of Jewish prisoners was used to clean up the bricks after the walls were bombed. In return, the prisoners received pieces of bread and a small plate of soup.

My mother used to change my looks cosmetically so that I would look older in the eyes of the Germans. My father, Marek, was a member of the Gombin municipality (town government) before the war started. He was very appreciated and esteemed among the Jewish and local Polish communities. After the First World War he lived for 10 years in the U.S.A. (1914) and came back to Gombin at the end of the war. He used to be the main English speaker and writer among the Gombin Jewish community.

One day someone called him to go to the Gestapo headquarters in Gombin. We had decided, however, that my father and sister should move to Warsaw, while my mother and I would stay in Gombin. They came to look for him.

Once they didn’t find him, they took me for their investigation and asked about him. I was beaten and my nose was broken, but I didn’t reveal where he was. I was locked in a dark basement for 48 hours and was released only when my mom paid for my release.

Life in the ghetto started to be very difficult. Germans executed Jewish people every day and never released them. A few of my uncles disappeared this way. Winter was difficult with extremely cold conditions. Many died from typhus and dysentery. Food was hard to get. Germans used to hang Jewish people in public, and we were forced to watch it.

One night in 1941, someone knocked on the door and told my mother and me to run away on a horse and carriage that waited outside. A priest gave us a birth certificate from other people and we escaped from Gombin without a plan. We went to Sochjev on the border with Gubernia. We wanted to reach Warsaw. We stayed 2 nights with a local farmer and afterwards took a train to Warsaw. It was the beginning of the Warsaw ghetto. When we told people that no Jews

Rakocz (Continued from page 2).

were left in Gombin, Plock, and Torun, nobody wanted to believe us.

I will not tell you how I made it through the rest of the war; it would be a long letter if I did. My family was deported to the concentration camp at Chelmno, and they all died there. The only survivors were my sister and me.

Be blessed for your important initiative!!! Ada Rakocz, July 2010, Hadera, Israel.

Polish Rescuers of the Wolfowicz Sisters

In January 1943, **Wojciech Maciejko**, who was living in Warsaw, helped two sisters from the ghetto, **Ada** and **Izabella Wolfowicz**. At first, he sheltered them in his apartment, but later on he took **Ada** to his parents, who had been friends of the **Wolfowicz**s before the war [in Gombin]. **Ada** stayed there until September 1944, while **Wojciech's** friends, **Waclaw** and **Irena Szymonowicz**, hid **Izabella**. After the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, the **Szymonowicz**s were expelled from the city and **Izabella** fortunately found them again in Bledow, near Grojec, Warsaw district. She stayed with them again until the liberation in January 1945. **Wojciech** also helped **Ludwika Luks**, who stayed for a short time in his apartment. After the war, the sisters **Ada** (later **Rakocz**) and **Izabella** (later **Bates**) moved to Israel.

*We remember the Righteous
Among the Nations*

*On May 23, 1967,
Yad Vashem
recognized **Wojciech
Maciejko** as*

*Righteous Among
the Nations. On*

September 29, 1994,

*Yad Vashem recognized **Waclaw Szymonowicz** and his wife, **Irena Szymonowicz**, as Righteous Among the Nations. In 1984, Yad Vashem also recognized **Maria Kaminska** as Righteous Among the Nations. **Maria Kaminska** was present during the Gombin Society trip to Gombin in 1999; she was recognized for her efforts at the rededication of the Gombin Jewish Cemetery. She died in Canada.*

**Maciejko, Wojciech
Szymonowicz, Waclaw
Szymonowicz, Irena
Kaminska, Maria**

Source: The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations, Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust, Poland. Editor-in-Chief: Israel Gutman, Associate Editor: Sara Bender Yad Vashem, <http://www1.yadvashem.org/righteous/index_righteous.html> Jerusalem 2004, Pages 474-475.

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