First Phase of Cemetery Cleanup and Restoration Completed

With donations from the membership, the Gombin Society has completed the first phase of the restoration of the Jewish Cemetery in Gąbin (pronounced Gombin). After three competitive bids were obtained, a construction company based in Gąbin was selected to repair the monument and gate and to weatherproof the matzevot (grave markers) and concrete of the monument. The total cost was $4400, of which about $2000 was raised from Society members.

The cemetery work began in April after the harsh Polish winter ended. The monument and gate are now restored to their original elegant state. The treatment of the stones should preserve them for some time. While this is an important accomplishment, we recognize that continuing maintenance will be necessary as the weather damage can be slowed, but never stopped.

Much remains to be done at the site. The long, perimeter fence needs to be repainted and the walkway from the gate [Continued. Page 3]
Middle School Students Learn about Gąbin’s Past Jewish History and Culture

by Arthur Gertzman

With support from the Gombin Society, the Forum For Dialog Among Nations (a not-for-profit organization based in Warsaw) has run an educational program about Poland’s Jewish history and culture for Middle School students in Gąbin. The goal is to teach local students about Jews in Poland by having the children investigate the Jewish places in their own town or community. The children create a report through which they can teach their teachers, parents and town officials about the Jewish life that existed in their town before the war.

The Gąbin program was run by a Middle School history teacher, who also runs the History Club. The teacher was very enthusiastic about the program that took place over four separate days spread over a five-week period in May and June, 2012.

On the first day, the students discussed what a typical day for Jewish students of their age would have been like in the mid 1930’s. They were charged with getting information about the town from several sources, but primarily by asking their parents and grandparents about their recollections of Gąbin’s Jewish presence. They located and identified the Jewish neighborhoods and places—such as the Synagogue, cemetery, streets, homes and schools. During the rest of the four-day program, the students expanded their knowledge of pre-War Jewish history in Gąbin and prepared a report. The report could be whatever format the students select—video, dramatization, or written report. On the final day the students presented the program and led a walking tour of the Jewish sites in the town [photo]. In July, the class reassembled to meet Minna Packer, a Gombin Society Board member, and led her through the town and reprised their report. We will be receiving a formal report about the Gąbin program with photos, hopefully before the December 2nd annual meeting in Cranford NJ.; [Don’t miss it—see page3]

Since modern Poles know little of the Jewish heritage and history of their towns, the Forum builds on the natural curiosity of school-age children to learn and teach Jewish history. The Forum hires and trains Polish University graduate students to learn about Jewish history and religion. They are drawn from Departments of Jewish Studies in eight major Polish universities. The Forum is funded by private and government funds, including the U.S. State Department. The Gombin Society provided a stipend of $4000 for this project. We were briefed on the progress of the Gąbin program by the Forum’s Monica Kuzon.

The Forum has run this program for high schools and middle schools in hundreds of Polish cities and towns. The new Museum of the History of Jews in Poland will also be a major institution through which the long trail of anti-Semitism can be brought to the attention of Poles. The museum will open in Warsaw in October 2013.
Donate now to the Campaign for Gombin.
Goal is to raise $25,000 for future projects including...
Next phase of repair and restoration of the Gombin Jewish Cemetery;
Educating the next generation of Jewish Gombiners.
Make checks payable to GJHGS, 45 Copper Mine Rd., Princeton NJ 08540

GOMBINER BURIAL PLOT FOR SALE: Located in the Gombiner section at Beth David Cemetery, Elmont, Long Island, New York. Originally purchased from Ben Kraut in 1992. Choice of either Section E, Block 6, Plot 1, Row M, or Section E, Block 6, Plot 3, Row L. Current value of similar plot today would be $3800. Will sell to a Society member or relative for half price, or $1900. Call Alan (son of Gombiner Joe Wood) at 347-502-7111.

Cemetary Restoration continued... to the monument needs to be reestablished. We do not know how many stones lie buried in the grave area, and a survey of stones and a plan to reset them is needed.

In 1999, the Gombin Society gained legal ownership of the Jewish cemetery property in Gąbin. During the War, all of the Matzevot had either been removed or knocked over. The Society sponsored a construction project to restore this sacred place. Under the leadership of Jeremy Freedman, Leon Zamosc, Ada Holtzman, other Gombiners and the Nissenbaum Foundation, a wrought iron fence was built around the property and a tasteful monument was constructed comprised of fallen Matzevot that were found on the grounds or returned by local Gąbin citizens. The new monument was formally dedicated in 1999. A film about the trip to Gombin for the dedication was the subject of the film by Minna Packer, “Back to Gombin.” Arthur Gertzman
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Go to our web site: www.gombinsociety.org
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