

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 descendents. 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 or to receive back issues, contact the Gombin Society by mail at 320 County Route 105, Highland Mills NY 10930 or by email.

www.gombin.org

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Historical & Genealogical
Society

The officers and board members of the
Gombin Society wish all Gombiner families a
happy and healthy New Year, 5767 (2006)

לשנה טובה תכתבו

“Back to Gombin II” in 2007; Board Members to visit Poland on Planning Trip; Plans for Gombin Synagogue Memorial

Plans for a Back to Gombin II trip are moving forward and include the dedication of a memorial garden with a monument on the site of the former Gombin Synagogue. The dates for this trip are July 16-24, 2007.

Mindy Proseri has developed a travel itinerary with EF Tours, and information about cost and travel is now available (see page 5). Ideally we will have 50 travelers so that we can use a single tour bus. We urge all interested Gombiner families to sign up soon and not miss this opportunity.

Final plans for the trip will be confirmed after an upcoming visit to Gombin in early November, 2006 by Mindy Proseri and Arthur Gertzman, GJHGS Board members. They will meet with the Mayor of Gombin to discuss the procedures and permissions for constructing the memorial park with a monument to the famous synagogue.

“Back to Gombin II” in 2007 (continued)

Construction will be completed before the trip in July, 2007 so that the dedication can take place while we are all there. The tour will also include visits to the other memorials built by our organization, including that at the Gombin cemetery and at Chelmo, where so many Gombiners perished during the Holocaust.

The Annual Meeting of the Gombin Society- usually held in the summer- is rescheduled for November 19, 2006 so that Mindy and Arthur can report on the results of their trip to Gombin and project plans can be approved by the board. The Annual meeting will be held once again at Temple El Mekor Chayim in Cranford NJ (see pages 5 and 6).

Gombin Synagogue Memorial; Board adopts the following Statement of Purpose

Our purpose is to memorialize the Jewish presence in Gombin, Poland. This will be accomplished by creating a small park and monument at the site of the Jewish Synagogue in Gombin. The site, on Kilinskega Street is currently one block from the main square of Gombin and is occupied by a small grocery store. The memorial park and monument would be built behind this store. This is the very ground where the Synagogue stood until its destruction by the Nazis in September 1939 (see page 4).



The Synagogue, built in 1710 was regarded as a landmark historical building. It was constructed of wood in the Oriental architectural style and was under the special supervision of the Polish government’s Department of Museums.

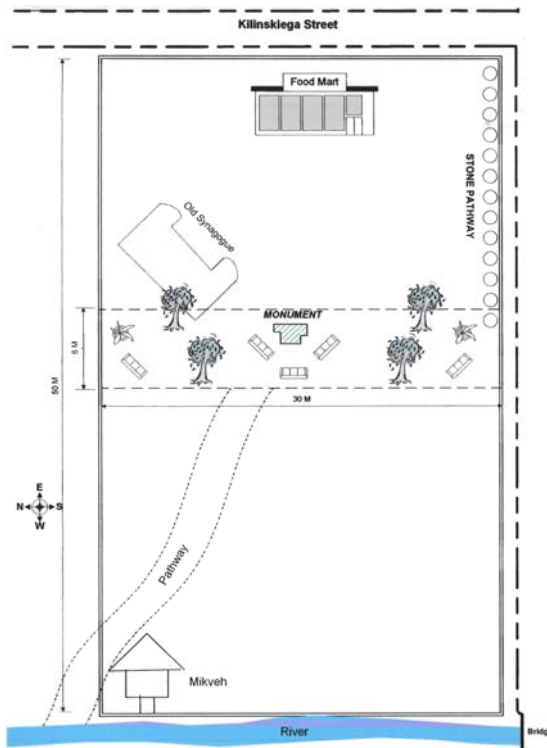
The park and monument would consist of a landscaped, rectangular park with trees, shrubs and three fixed benches. The monument would be an engraved metal plaque and suitable pedestal depicting the image of the Synagogue and a brief description of the significance of the location.

Jews had been in Gombin from the sixteenth century and lived in harmony with their neighbors. After the Nazi invasion in Sept 1939, Jews and Christians both suffered from the horrors of the Nazi occupation. In March 1942, 300 Jewish men and boys of Gombin were taken to nearby Konin and massacred. On 17 April 1942, all the remaining Jews, including the women and children were taken to the Chelmo concentration camp and gassed. Jewish life ceased in Gombin after these horrible events.

It is our purpose to establish this memorial to rekindle the flame of Jewish presence in Gombin so that all people can know that Jews lived in this small town. In cooperation with the Gombin authorities, we wish to build this monument and dedicate it to the memory of the centuries of harmony between the Jewish people of Gombin, Poland and their neighbors.

Plan for Memorial to the Wooden Shul of Gombin

Board member Arthur Gertzman is leading a planning effort to create a memorial garden and monument on the site of the famous wooden shul of Gombin. The working plan is shown below. The site is currently the parking lot for a small food market and is



privately owned. The Board is now working with Michael Traison, a well known American lawyer with offices in Poland, and Monika Krawczyk of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland to research the ownership and legal issues related to the site.

The Gombin Society had previously considered reclaiming these communal Jewish properties in Gombin but decided against it. The deadline for making such claims under the restitution laws has now passed.

During their visit in November, Mindy and Arthur will meet with the Mayor of Gombin to explore the local issues, including zoning and building permission needed. In addition, they hope to explore potential contractors to carry out the construction.

Lowey and Stupay Families visit Gombin

On July 9, 2006, 8 members of the families of Ernest Lowey and Arthur Stupay visited Gombin. Lowey writes:

“After a slow start, we were off to Gombin, about 2+ hours drive from Warsaw. Cousin Arthur knew of Dr. Maria Kaminska in Gombin. Now 84 years old and in poor health, she showed us where the old synagogue once stood and then took us to the old Jewish cemetery. Here the words fail the event. To enter a cemetery with no gravestones is amazing! At the back of the cemetery

is the memorial wall on which- on a fragment of a tombstone- I noticed the family name “Zyons” which is my maternal grandmother’s maiden name. It was a strong emotional time for me.

“On rereading, these notes seem rather like a travel journal, but in fact, the excitement and anticipation and execution were all part of a vast drama! I hope next year brings another visit! Many thanks for your efforts on behalf of those who came before us”

67 Years ago - Burning of the Gombin Synagogue

The Jewish settlement in Gabin was extremely old. The synagogue, also very old, was built of wood in Oriental style. The thick wooden logs, lying one on top of another, were still fresh and in good condition. Above the synagogue entrance there were two tall turrets, each topped by a flag. The flag on the right turret had the year 1710 imprinted on it and the flag on the left turret had the year 1893. One assumed that 1710 was the year the synagogue was built, and 1893 the year when it was restored. Thus, the synagogue was estimated to be 231 years old.

The synagogue contained a magnificent carved ark. According to legend, it was designed without the use of any tools, with the craftsman utilizing nothing more than a single carving knife. In the anteroom to the right of the entrance there was a set of shackles once used for religious offenders. There were neck-fetters shaped like two hoops, which were locked around the offender's neck. The ascent to the *bimah* consisted of six small steps. On the *bimah* there was a chair for Elijah the prophet. The six steps were therefore associated with the 'six steps of the throne' (I Kings 10:19. The reference here is to a description of King Solomon's throne).

Inside the synagogue there hung an old brass chandelier, crowned with a Polish eagle. The chandelier hailed from before the time of the first partition of Poland (1772). The eastern wall was covered with old sheets of brass which were engraved with various flowers. There was an ark-covering fashioned from the saddle of a Tartar general, sewn with threads of pure gold. There were more than fifty Torah scrolls, as well as ancient, antique curtains for the ark.

The governor's office forbade any alteration of the synagogue's appearance, to prevent it from losing its antiquated style.



The Nazi army entered Gabin on September 9, 1939. On Thursday, September 21, 1939, the order came for all Jewish men to assemble at the new marketplace. Everyone, needless to say, heeded the command. They were awaited at the market by soldiers who beat them horribly. At the same time, military officers set fire to the synagogue with gasoline. The synagogue, *beys medresh* and the entire outlying Jewish quarter were consumed by fire. The Torah scrolls had been rescued beforehand and were hidden in the cellar of a brick house. The silver Torah ornaments had also been removed to the iron safe in the *Kehilah* offices. But both these buildings were totally burned down in the synagogue fire. Thus the Torah scrolls and silver ornaments were also lost. Several Jews were pushed into the flames by the military officers who set the fire, and were saved from certain death only thanks to a miracle.

Source: Rabbi Shimon Huberband: *Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust*, Yeshiva University Press, 1987 (pp 305-307). Originally Posted at Leon Zamosc' Web Site in 1997. (Edited by B. Guyer, 2006). (Devi Tuszynski print, "The Synagogue of Gombin")

“Back to Gombin II” 2007 – Proposed Itinerary

We continue to work with EF Tours on the exact itinerary for the 2007 “Back to Gombin” trip, but the following activities will be included:

- Visit Gombin to participate in the dedication of the new memorial to the *shul*;
- Visit the Gombin Jewish cemetery with its monument of *matevot*; the Gombin Historical Museum in the old square; and tour Gombin including the old and new market squares and an opportunity to locate former Jewish sites;
- Meetings with Polish officials and residents of Gombin;
- Visit to Plock and the surrounding countryside, including the famous “vald;”
- Bus trip to Chelmno where most Gombiners perished and see the monument erected there in 1999; the Konin Regional Museum with its exhibit of Judaica; and Konin memorial;
- Warsaw with the remains of the Warsaw Ghetto, Monument to the Ghetto Fighters, Mila 18, the rebuilt old city, Chopin, gardens, synagogue, and more
- Trip to Krakow with its old Jewish sites and Auschwitz for those who wish to go;

Included in the pricing from EF Tours are the following:

- Round-trip airfare;
- Transfers to and from airport and hotel and destination cities;
- Hotel stays in nice hotels; Continental breakfast and dinners daily;
- Full-time tour director.

FOR INFORMATION ONLINE: www.eftours.com and VIEW TOUR # 859360
Or CONTACT MINDY PROSPERI AT 845-642-7654 or prosperi1@frontiernet.net

Travel Scholarships for “3rd generation” Gombiners

The Board wants to assure that all Gombiner “grandchildren” have an opportunity to participate in this 2007 trip. Therefore, the Board is offering scholarships to encourage teenagers and young adults to take part. Up to 10 scholarships of up to \$1000 each will be available. Applicants must propose a project that they will complete during the visit and submit the project after their return.

GJHGS Annual Meeting- November 19, 2006, Cranford

The Annual Meeting of the Gombin Society membership will be held on November 19, 2006 at Temple El Mevor Chayim in Cranford, NJ. Many thanks to Elliot Ballen and the Temple for hosting us once again. The Board will meet in the morning before the annual meeting; all are welcome to attend. The agenda should be exciting and important, and will include the following:

- Report of the planning visit to Poland by Arthur Gertzman and Mindy Prospero;
- Update on the Gombin Synagogue Memorial Project;
- Update on plans for the Back to Gombin II trip in July 2007;
- 3rd Generation activities and opportunity for young Gombiners to meet;
- Report of the cemetery committee

The Annual meeting provides time to meet and greet old friends and renew Gombin connections. A delicious kosher brunch will be served. **Please RSVP** so that we can plan for food. See the sign up sheet (page 6) or contact Mindy Prospero.



GOMBIN JEWISH HISTORICAL &
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Annual Meeting of the Gombin Society

November 19, 2006. Noon Brunch; 12 to 2pm Meeting
Temple El Mekor Chayim, 338 Walnut Street, Cranford NJ 07016
Call 908-276-9231 for directions or contact Mindy Prosperi

Admission and brunch (in advance): \$5 per person, \$18 per family
(at the door): \$6 per person, \$20 per family. Children under 5 are free.

Membership dues: 2006-07

Per year: Regular member: \$36; International members: \$18; Students: \$10.

Update your contact information

Please update your information by completing the form below.

Make out checks to the **Gombin Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society (GJHGS)**

Tear and send to: **Mindy Prosperi, 320 County Route 105, Highland Mills NY 10930**

___ Yes, I plan to attend the annual meeting. Enclosed is check for _____

___ No, I can't attend the Annual meeting

___ Dues for 2006-07. Enclosed is check for _____

___ Send me information about the Back to Gombin II trip, July 16-24, 2007

Update my contact information as follows:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____; Email address: _____

Names & addresses of others to add to the Gombin mailing list: _____
