



JEWISH PRINTS IN PLUNGĖ



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„If you deny or forget the past, then you are not able to have or love the present and the future” (B. Efronas). The tragedy of the Jewish nation during the time of WWII is the dark pages of history for everyone. However, this brutal period is and will always be a part of our history, which cannot be forgotten. We must talk about it and inform the next generations. They must know, because in a period between the WWI and the WWII, Jews were active citizens of Plungė and other towns of Lithuania.

Like other Jews of Lithuania, the Jews of Plungė had their own community, their language, their customs, and their religion. They mainly worked with trade, crafts and light industry. However, some of Jews were farmers. The traders had strong commercial ties with Klaipėda (former Memelis) and its surroundings, which was a part of Germany at that time.

In the election of 1924, seven Jews were elected into the board of members. Dovydas Boruchas Goldvaseris was elected as a burgomaster of Plungė. He worked in this position from 14 February 1920 to 9 September 1920 and from 15 August 1921 to 5 October 1930. In the election of 1931 four Jews Mordechajus Pozinas, Abrahamas Lipmanas, Šlomė Levis and Hackelis Zaksas were elected into the board of members. In the next election, only 3 Jews Pozinas, Goldvaseris ir Lipmanas were elected. One of them took the post of deputy mayor.

Council with burgomaster
D. B. Goldvaseris (man
with tape).
Photo from
Z. Paulauskaitė archive



Fires. In summer of 1888, the fire destroyed 25 houses of Jews. The duke Mykolas Oginskis tried to help those families in every way.

Another big fire occurred on 24 July 1894. During this fire, 400 houses were burned down. 323 out of 400 houses belonged to Jews. Many other public buildings were destroyed: the big synagogue, the small synagogue, one little wooden synagogue and a public sauna. The newspaper *Ha-Melitz* published a request for an assistance to all Jewish communities and emigrants. He was signed by Zevulun Leibas Baritas, who was a member of the Board of the Assistance Organization. With the help of the duke Oginskis, 36 buildings were rebuilt, including the big building for shops in the market square.

In March of 1931 there was another big fire. This time, one third of all buildings were burned down. The Jews community of Lithuania and other countries helped to rebuild many buildings. The communities of Cape Town and Johannesburg from South Africa sent a huge sum. Over the years, most homes have been rebuilt and some of them were even bigger and better.

Plungė's fire in 1931.
Photo I.Štropaus



Plungė after fire in 1931.
Photo from
J. Kliekutė collection



Organizations and associations. Among the welfare and support organizations in Plungė, there was The Free Credit Union, which provided the interest-free loans; the hospital *Bikur Holim*, which provided medical care and medicine to the poor, etc. The public organization *OZE* provided free medical assistance and free food for poor children who were studying at the school. Abraham Posen finished his business and dedicated his life for the aims and goals of organisation. The funds allocated for this activity were obtained from gamblers mostly. In addition, *OZE* supported Jewish sports associations and libraries. Plungė hosted Jewish sports organizations: *Makabi*, *Hapoel*, which united football players, chess players and other athletes.

Like all Jewish communities in Lithuania, there was a *Chevra Kadiša* - the burial organization. This organization had no management. The members voluntarily dug out pits, installed the boards, prepared the body, put a piece of clay pot on the eyes, wrapped body in a white shirt, laid it on the pit and buried it. The members took

care of every funeral all over the year. All money and donations were used to maintain their prayer house and to help the poor families in case of the funeral. The prayer house of this organization was called *Šamosim Klauz*.

Men from Chevra
Kadiša society.
Photo from Yad Vashem



The Time of World War II. In 1940, most of the former Jewish factories and shops were nationalized. All political parties and youth organizations were banned. Hebrew educational institutions were closed. Five Jewish families, consisting of 14 people (4 preteen kids) were acknowledged as unreliable and deported to Siberia in June of 1941.

On 22 June 1941, the German troops had entered the territory of Soviet Union. The Jews tried to migrate from the city to surrounding villages, but only 30 families were able to escape.

On 25 June 1941, the German troops arrived in Plungė. On the next day, the Jews were ordered to leave their homes and meet in the synagogue. There was an armed guard near the door that prevented Jewish prisoners to get any food from Lithuanians. The situation in the synagogue was terrible: dirt, stink, and starvation all around.

On 13 July 1941, the Jews were forced to go places where the pits had already been prepared. The massacre took from Sunday morning until the next day. In the morning, the killers came back to the town with songs. The names of murderers are stored in the archives of the Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

Only 221 people from the whole Jews community of Plungė had survived the war. The survivors were hidden by Lithuanians, those who escaped to the Soviet Union and those who were imprisoned in the Šiauliai ghetto.

After the German troops left Lithuania, almost 30 Jews families returned to their homes. However, the houses were empty and robbed. As a result, many families moved to other towns of Lithuania or even Israel. In 1970, there were 41 Jews in Plungė. In 1979 there lived 25 Jews and in 1989 only 15 Jews were left. Currently, there is no Jews in Plungė. Most of their houses and other heritage are destroyed as well.

The route “Jewish prints in Plungė”

DARIAUS IR GIRĖNO str. (former Žemaičių Kalvarijos, Stoties, Malūno str.)

1 Mill of Mendelis Zaksas.

During the ruling period of the duke Oginskis, a dam was built in the river Babrungas and a stream of the river was turned to the right. Near the former Žemaičių Kalvarijos street a mill was built in order to serve the manor. The two-storey building was made of stones. A mill was built near the street and got a few low windows, behind the mill there was a park of the manor. The mill was operating by the river water.

After the First World War in 1918, this mill was rented by Mendelis Zaksas. He transformed the mill in such a way that it began to produce electricity that was selling to city authorities, entrepreneurs or rich citizens. The mill was demolished in 1962.

Plungė mill.
Photo from
Z. Paulauskaitė archive



2 Cinema “Lyra” of Mendelis Peiresas.

Although very little information is remained, the primary purpose of the building standing here was the brewery, which might be built in the 19th century and sponsored by Mykolas Oginskis. Later, a shelter for the abandoned children was founded by Marija Oginskienė. However, in the beginning of the WWI Marija Oginskienė left Lithuania and the building was bought by Mendelis Peiresas. In order to properly adapt the building to the purpose of cinema, he planned to rebuild the house and even had a reconstruction plan. However, but due to unknown reasons he could not do it. Finally, in 1931, the 150-seat cinema “Lyra” was opened.

The cinema was used not only for watching movies, many performances, events and meetings were held here as well. The theatre was not a cheap entertainment. In



order to make silent movies more entertaining, Boruchas Gerškė and Kalmanas Kaplanas played the popular Jewish melodies with violin and mandolin.

At the end of an interwar period, the building was re-organized into a dairy. It was closed after the restoration of the independent Lithuania. In 2010, the abandoned building was set on fire and it was demolished.

Cinema „Lyra” in
1938-1939.
Samogitian art museum
archive



S. NĖRIES str. (former Vandens str.)

3 Jewish gymnasium (currently S. Nėries str. 4).

There was a state-sponsored Jewish Gymnasium in Plungė. The building was presented by the governor of the city, the duke Mykolas Oginskis. Only the Hebrew language was used in school. On the first floor there was a Tarbut library with 500 Hebrew and 500 Yiddish books. In 1930 the Jewish community “Liebherr von Wiessen” had founded the library that was dedicated to the famous Jewish writer J. L. Perecas. The library got more than 1,000 Yiddish books. A reading-room was opened near and all daily newspapers were sent there from Kaunas. In 1935, there were 60 subscribers of Jewish daily newspapers in Plungė. After the war, the Jewish gymnasium was transformed into a multi-dwelling house.

Saved Jewish
gymnasium.
Author of the photo
K. Narkutė - Beniūšienė



4 Cheder Religious primary school (currently Dariaus ir Girėno str. 4).

All Jewish boys started a school at Cheders in the age of three years old. These schools were oriented towards the study of religious scriptures, but not on the develop-

ment of skills that would allow pupils to make money later. At the age of thirteen, the studies in Cheder were over. It was an official age when a boy could start a craft or profession. The best students were allowed to continue their studies in Beit Midrash or in Yeshiva later.

In 1906, a rich Jewish teacher opened a Cheder school in Plungė. All disciplines were taught in Hebrew, children were taught to understand the Religious Scriptures (Talmud). However, after sometime this school was named as a dangerous Cheder and it was closed after two years. Only one Talmud Torah school was left where the sons of rich families were studying before the WWI. The school was destroyed after the war.

Cheder school.
Photo from Yad Vashem



5 House of Jachielis Šeras (currently Dariaus ir Girėno str. 17).

He had a bus and transported the passengers. He was killed in Raseiniai during the WWII.

6 House of Mulė Pelcas (currently Dariaus ir Girėno str. 11).

First of all, the brothers Mulė and Motelis Pelcai had returned to Plungė with their families. Both of them were farmers. While living in the city, he held a cow and worked as a purchaser of consumer cooperatives. He had a wife Hana. They had a son Abraomas and two daughters Eta and Taibala. Eta had married to Slavin and lived in a house of her parents. She died in a young age from cancer. Before the death she was working as a teacher and was a public figure. Taibala had moved to Israel after the war and died there.

Later, Mulė Pelcas had moved to Israel as well, where he died when he became old.

7 House of a whitesmith (currently Dariaus ir Girėno str. 5).

The name of the whitesmith was Zundė (his surname is forgotten), he had a wife and two daughters. The whole family was shot in Kaušėnai.

VYTAUTO str. (former Bažnyčios str.)

8 House of Pozinai (currently Vytauto str. 2).

Next to each other, there was a wooden and brick house of the brothers Pozinai. There was a food store owned by Abraomas Pozinas on the right side of the building. On the left side of a house was a haberdashery shop owned by Motelis Pozinas. Now there is a parking place.

On the left side Pozinas
store, in front „Kromai”,
on the right side hotel of
Chaimas Restas.
Photo from J. Šimkus
album „Plungė”



9 Hotel of Chaimas Restas (currently Vytauto str. 1).

On 31 March 1931, at 12 – 1PM, a fire occurred in a wooden house of the merchant Chaimas Restas. The hotel was located in the same building. The wind carried the fire to other houses because the roofs were made of wooden chips or straws. The fire spread in several directions. On the one direction there was a wooden church. Fortunately, there were two houses made of bricks, so the church was saved. However, almost all houses in the Kuliai street (currently J. Tumo-Vaižganto street) were burned down and more than fifteen houses were burned down on the Rietavas street as well. The fire destroyed half of the houses in the center, around the Jewish shops (currently the square of Old Town). The fire destroyed many buildings and 90% of them belonged to Jews.

Former hotel of Chaimas
Restas on the left side.
Author of the photo
K. Narkutė - Beniūšienė



10 House of the hatter Berelis Presas (currently Vytauto str. 3).

He had a son named Icikas and a daughter named Hana. Mauša Kaplanas, Bašė Kaplanienė and Idkė Kaplanaitė lived in the same house. All residents of this house were shot in Kaušėnai.

11 People Bank of Jews (Volksbank) (*currently Vytauto str. 5*).

Volksbank was the most important point in the economic life of Jewish people. There were 321 members in the beginning, later only 220 members left, of which 15 percent were Lithuanians. The Board of Members were made up of honourable people of the Jewish community Ch. Gamza, A. Gurvičius, A. Pozinas, Š. Šurdas, Š. J. Mecas, J. Garbaitė, M. Amolskis, T. Keselis, Odesas and Emdinas.

12 House and photography studio of the photographer Mendelis Berkovičius (*currently Vytauto str. 6a*).

This house was a photo studio owned by one of the most famous interwar photographers of Plungė Mendelis Berkovičius. The house survived both wars and today it is painted in a dark cherry colour as it was before. Mendelis Berkovičius was born in November of 1880 or 1881 in town of Ilucin (now Ludza, Latvia) and was a member of Paberžė Jewish community. It is not known how he became a photographer and why did he move to Plungė.

The records in State Archive of the Russian Federation in St. Petersburg notes that in 21 October 1903, the photographer M. Berkovičius received a governor permission to create a photography studio in Plungė. As a result, the history of photography in Plungė has started in 1903. Although, the date might be incorrect if the photographer Berkovičius received a permission a local police chief.

Famous Jewish community figures, entrepreneurs, craftsmen, priests and other residents of the town and guests came to take pictures here. Mendelis Berkovičius and his wife had two sons Polis (Peisachas - Mordechajus, born in 1916) and Hiršas.

In 15 July 1941, Berkovičius, his family and other Jews of Plungė were imprisoned in a synagogue. The photographer was hustled into a pit and died in flames. Other members of family were killed in Kaušėnai.



In this house was photo studio.
Author of the photo
K. Narkutė – Beniušienė

LAISVĖS avenue (former Bulvaro str.)

13 Building of Plungė municipality, Post and Telegraph Building (*currently Laisvės avenue 8*).

The family of Goldvaseriai had a shop of bicycles and sewing machines. It was near the main market square. The shop was owned by Mrs Goldvaserienė while her husband was busy with the issues of town management. In 26 August 1919, at the first meeting of the city municipality Boruchas Dovydas Goldvaseris was elected as an assistant to the burgomaster of Plungė, Edvardas Andrijauskas. In summer of 1920, Edvardas Andrijauskas left the position of burgomaster and B. D. Goldvaseris stepped in this position temporary. V. Braudė replaced him at the council meeting until 15 August 1921. B. D. Goldvaseris was a burgomaster of the city until October of 1930. In 1928, B. D. Goldvaseris was awarded the Lithuanian Independence Medal by the president Antanas Smetona.

The family had a son Haris and a daughter named Anetė. She graduated from the *Saulė* Gymnasium in Plungė. In 1937, the family moved to southern Africa. Boruchas Dovydas Goldvaseris died in 1956.



Here are flats now.
Author of the photo
K. Narkutė – Beniušienė

14 Dance and cinema hall “Laisvė“ of Efraimo Izrailovičius, The Riflemen's Club (*currently Laisvės avenue 15*).

The performances and cabaret evenings were held here. Young Lithuanians usually participated in the events together with young Jews.

15 House of the lawyer Hiršas Rolnikas (*currently Laisvės avenue 11*).

Icikas-Abelis Rolnikas, a grandfather of Hiršas, was born in 1880 in Viekšniai. He moved to Plungė in 1894, before his wedding with Chana Levi. She was a daughter of a successful owner of a clothing store. Icikas has studied Talmud a lot. He worked in the store only on market days. Icikas was murdered in 1941 in Kaušėnai. Chana was an overbearing yet a wise woman. She died before the WWII.

They had five kids: Berlis, Hirša, Mejeris, Michelis and a daughter Pesa.

Berlis took the family store and successfully owned it until the Soviet occupation. As he was a capitalist, he and his family were exiled to Siberia where he survived the war. Šloma Rolnikas, a son of Berlis, moved to Israel after the WWII.

Zionist Mejeris moved in Israel in 1925. He became a publisher and owned a bookstore in Jerusalem. Joramas Ronenas, a son of him, was a well-known radio and television journalist in Israel.

Michelis (born in 1907) worked as a lawyer in Paris. He was a French resistance hero, captured by the Nazis and killed in 1941. The famous French poet and writer Lui Aragon told about his death to his brother Hiršas. According to him, before the death, all men required to remove the chains, open their eyes and started singing La Marsellaise on an edge of a pit. Michelis was married but had no kids.

Pesa (born in 1917) did not survived in the Holocaust. She died in a camp in Latvia, where she was relocated after the marriage.

Hiršas was the eldest brother. He was born in Plungė in 1898. He began to study at Yeshiva, but after being eliminated out of it, he entered a secular school. After completing his PhD in Leipzig, Germany, he became a lawyer. He was delegated to represent Lithuania in the first congress of Zionist. In 1923 he married Taiba (Tauba) Kogan, born in 1898 in Tryšiai (Telšiai district). Later, he became a head of the Hebrew Gymnasium in Raseiniai, but worked as a lawyer as well. In 1939, before the World War II, he and his family moved to Vilnius. He and Taiba had four children: Miriam, Maša, Ruvenas (born in 1935 in Klaipėda) and Riva (born in 1933 in Plungė). At the begining of the WWII, Hirša left Vilnius and joined the Lithuanian Armed Forces, hoping that his family would be able to escape. However, Taiba and all kids were imprisoned in the Vilnius ghetto. Tauba and all sons died in 1943.

Hiršas Rolnikas and two daughters survived the WWII. Maša Rolnikaitė studied at the Gorky Institute of Literature in Moscow, married and together with her husband moved to live in St. Petersburg. After the war, lawyer H. Rolnikas lived in Vilnius. His daughter Miriam became an advocate and lived in Klaipėda.

16 House of the Hirzonai and Rolnikai families (*currently Vytauto str. 19*).

The Hirzonai family lived on the first floor of the building and the family of merchant Berelis Rolnikas lived on the second floor. His brother was a lawyer Rolnikas.

Berelis Rolnikas owned a family store. Despite the growing hostility of local Lithuanians against the Jewish people and especially the Jewish entrepreneurs, the clothing store of successfully survived until 1940 when Lithuania was occupied by Soviets. The Soviet government nationalized the lands, enterprises and shops. Berelis, his wife Riva (former Rabinovičiūtė) and children, Šloma and Rosa were exiled to Siberia, where they survived the war. Šloma and his sister started to study engineering. In 1961, they were allowed to come back to Lithuania where his father Berelis began to work as a warehouse keeper.

17 The memorial for doctor B. Efrasas (*currently Vytauto str. 14*).

Borisas Efrasas was born on the 1st November in 1914 in a family of the intelligentsia. In 1920, they moved to Kaunas. His father Israel was an accountant in bank and his mother Gita was a dentist. Borisas had a sister Es-tera, she was a journalist. He lived in Lithuania except the short escape during the war. Borisas graduated from the Kaunas gymnasium, served as a soldier in the Army of Lithuania. Most of his summers were spent in Plungė. In 1939, Graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of Vytautas Magnus University and in 1940 received a license to work as a doctor.

After graduating, he worked as a surgeon at Kaunas Jewish Hospital and Marijampolė County Hospital as well. In 1941, he went to Kazakhstan with his family, where he was appointed as a head of the Balchash City Hospital. He lived there until the end of the war and in 1945 he returned to Lithuania, where worked at the Vilnius Railway Hospital until 1979.

In 1958, Borisas Efrasas made the first successful surgery for a patient suffering from the birth heart failure and initiated heart surgery in Lithuania. Although the day before the operation he was warned by other surgeons about the potential risk, the operation was successful, and the patient lived 25 years after it.

He was married to Tatjana Archipova and had a son. He finished his career in 1979 when the serious heart problems occurred. Borisas Efrasas died in 2001 in Vilnius.

18 House of Gamza (*currently Birutės str. 19*).

Chakelis Gamza was a horse purchaser. He bought horses, hired people to take them to Klaipėda, and then exported those horses to Holland. Despite the fact that he was the richest man in Plungė, he met a terrible fate.

Gamza and his wife were exiled to Siberia. Both of them were old and cannot properly work there, so they were given a little food to survive only. They never lost hope to return to Plungė. However,

Chakelis Gamza and his wife died from starving there in Siberia.



House of Gamza.
Author of the photo
S. Galvadiškytė

PAPRŪDŽIO str. (former Paprūdės str.)
TUMO VAIŽGANTO str. (former Kulių, Klaipėdos str.)

19 House of the blacksmith Šloumė Gilisas (*currently Tumo Vaižganto str. 14*).

He was killed in the backyard of synagogue together with his son. His wife and daughter were shot in Kaušėnai. Brothers Špicai lived in that same house. They were communists and people called them “ravens”, because they released ravens with red labels on their feet during the communist holidays. The brothers were able to escape to the Soviet Union and moved to Israel after the war.



Former blacksmith's house.
Author of the photo
K. Narkutė – Beniušienė

20 House of Rivė Kanienė (*currently Tumo Vaižganto str. 16*).

She was a grocery store owner and lived together with her sisters. They all were killed in Kaušėnai.

21 House of Icikas Odesas (*currently Tumo Vaižganto str. 20*).

His wife was Bliumė. They had a grocery store. Only his daughter survived and moved to Israel after the war.

22 Ritual slaughterhouse.

The Jews of Plungė had a ritual slaughterhouse as well. They bought food from the farmers' market. Oxen and cows were bought in neighbouring villages. The farmer had to take the sold animal to the slaughterhouse. There was a Jewish-owned meat shop in the town. The front parts of animals were sold to the Jews, and the back parts were sold to the Lithuanians.

23 (*currently Tumo Vaižganto str. 22*). Until the great fire of Plungė in 1931, this house belonged to **Chaimas Goldbergas**, the descendant of Motė Litvinas, and **Šmulis Aronovičius**. The locals have said that the lower part of walls of this house, have been decorated with the images of lions. This is a typical Jewish ornament.



House saved, but abandoned.
Author of the photo
K. Narkutė – Beniušienė

24 House of Jankelis Pikeris (*currently Tumo Vaižganto str. 37*).

He was able to escape to the Soviet Union before the Germans occupation. After the war, he had returned to Plungė and took a loan for the construction of a house. It was a man with a great sense of humour and he knew a lot of jokes. He worked a manager of a shop. Despite the fact that this shop was national, the locals called it a Pikeris store. Later, a family moved to Israel. His wife Rocha wrote a book there about her life during evacuation in a time of war.

25 House of Hana Rik (*currently Tumo Vaižganto str. 13*).

26 House of Leibas Orlianskis (*currently Tumo Vaižganto str. 9*).

The house was built near synagogues. In 1941, the house was forfeited by the voluntary assistants of German troops (*Hilfswilliger*). The commandant Jonas Noreika known as Vėtra settled here. He was the organizer of the massacre of the Jews in Plungė.



On the left side synagogue, on the right side L. Orlianskis house.
Photo from Facebook

27 Synagogues.

Jews had six prayer houses in Plungė. In 1814, the Great Synagogue was built and in 1864 the Small Synagogue was built sponsored by Jankelis Geleris.



The great synagogue.
Photo from Yad Vashem

Both of them were built from bricks and worked until 1940. The other four wooden synagogues (called clauses) stood in other places. The Great Synagogue, the Small Synagogue and the four wooden clauses had formed the centre of the religious life of the Plungė Jewish community. The main rabbi was Levis Špicas, one of the most important rabbis in Lithuania at that time. The last rabbi of Plungė was Abraomas Mordechajus Vesleris, the spiritual leader of the Telšiai Seminary and the active member of the political party of the Jewish orthodox (*Agudat Yisrael*).

After the fire of the 4th decade of the 20th century, the synagogue was reconstructed. In Soviet times, there was a culture house. Synagogue was destroyed in 2008. According to some sources, the last time when this building was used as a synagogue was in 1941.

After the war, there was a bakery, a flax warehouse, culture house of the factory *Linių audiniai*, a sports hall. As the returning process had been protracted, the building was devastated and it a huge amount of money was needed to restore the building. Therefore, the Jewish community sold it to Cooperative Trade of Plungė and it was allowed to demolish the building later.



The last wooden synagogue was demolished in 2007.
Photo from Center for Jewish Art

RIETAVO str.

28 House of the Grolmanai family (*currently Rieta-vo str. 4*).

Tevje and Bliumė Grolmanai lived in two-story house. The family survived the Holocaust because they successfully let the country. Tevje was disabled after the war and he did not work anywhere. His wife Blumė was a trader. They had a daughter named Liuba and a son Izraelis. Later they left Lithuania and moved to Israel.

29 The public sauna and the district of poor.

The most appalling place in Plungė was Rietavo street, where many wooden slums surrounded by rubbishes were built. The poor Jews lived there: shoemakers, tailors, water carriers, drivers, beggars and other poor people. There was a sauna for the Jewish community as well. A mikva was installed in this sauna. It is a little pool for married women to bathe according to Jewish religious practices. Many people gathered here before the holidays.



Ritual bath.
Photo from Yad Vashem

30 Old Jewish Cemetery.

The old Jewish cemetery was near to the town centre, half of his place now is occupied by a school built in 1975. Before the constructions were started, the government that the relatives are able to take the remains and bury them somewhere else. However, only few people did this. The tomb stones were brought to Kaušėnai, where they laid for more than fifteen years. When the Independence of Lithuania was restored, Jakovas Bunka collected those tomb stones and set up the lines that remains the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Now, there are no bodies left in the cemetery. However, it must be saved as a part of Jews history in Plungė.



The remains of a Jewish cemetery fragment.
Author of the photo
E. Valužė

TELŠIŲ str. (former Prezidento A. Smetanos str.)

31 House of the blacksmith Motė Aronovičius (*currently Telšių str. 3*).

He had two kids: a daughter and a son. Motė was killed in Kaušėnai. His son was allowed to escape to the Soviet Union and survived the WWII. He stayed in Russia after the war.

32 House of the Levitai family (*currently Telšių str. 13*).

The family of Abelis Levitas is from Plungė. His grandfather was born here. A father of Abelis moved to Republic of South Africa and survived the Holocaust.

Abelis was born in Republic of South Africa. He and his wife Glenda visited Lithuania in 1998 for the first time. The main purpose of their trip was to learn something about the family of Levitai. Unfortunately, all members of the family had died during the war. 43 members of the Levitai family are commemorated in the Kaušėnai Memorial.

Abelis Levitas and his wife set up their own family fund. They had supported the projects of the Kaušėnai Memorial and the Tolerance Centre in Plungė.

33 The monument “To all good people of Plunge” (*Telšių str.*).

The sculptor is Antanas Vaskys. The monument was built by initiating and funding by the J. Bunka's Charity and Sponsorship fund.



The monument.
Author of the photo
K. Narkutė – Beniušienė

34 The hotel-restaurant of Minė Neimanienė (*currently Telšių str. 5*).

It is possible that M. Neimanienė had another hotel in the current Vytautas street.

SENAMIESČIO str. (former Turgaus str.)

35 Shop of Z. Slavinas (*currently Senamiesčio square 5*).



On the right side iron store of Z. Slavinas.
Photo from E. Bunka archive



The former store now.
Author of the photo
K. Narkutė – Beniušienė

36 House of Icikas Zusmanavičius (*currently Senamiesčio str. 6*).



That's house looks like in nowadays.
Author of the photo
K. Narkutė – Beniušienė

37 Little shops of Jews called “Kromas” (*former Turgaus str.*).

Many of the former buildings in the town centre belonged to Jewish merchants, traders and craftsmen. In the place where is a fountain of Plungė centre now, there was a market square. There was a large, long, red brick building where many shops were working on the both sides. Those shops were called “Kromas”.

During the fire of 1894 summer, all houses around the Plungė Market Square were



Kromai in Plungė.
Photo from Samogitian art museum

burned. After the fire, the duke Mykolas Oginskis built a large house for those shops and rented it to Jewish traders of Plungė.

It was possible to find silks, fabrics, dishes, haberdashery, bicycles, sewing machines, ironware, agricultural tools and many other things in those markets. The Jews were selling goods on the debt. Many rich traders as Goldvaseris, Rolnikas, Plungianskis had shops in this market square. There was no electricity, oil bulbs or candles were used only. The rooms were tight and dark.

Shops were unheated in winter. However, a pot of charcoal was used as a little heater.

These little shops in the Plungė market square survived two wars and many fires, but in 1951 they were finally burned down by the fateful fire. They were not rebuilt after that.

38 House of Simonas Olšvangas (*currently Senamiesčio square 3*).

The family of Olšvangai was wide and rich. Simonas Olšvangas was a trader and had a wooden house. He owned a restaurant here in Plungė (currently the Centre of Culture).

On the courtyard there was a very nice stone house with a big balcony. Leonas Olšvangas (born in 1905 in Plungė) lived there. He graduated from the *Saulė* Gymnasium in Plungė, later studied in Kaunas and Germany. In 1938, he married his childhood friend Juzefa Asauskaitė. She saved many Jews during the WWII and, as a result, one tree in the memorial garden of Yad Vasheme, Israel, is dedicated to her because of such courage.

During the war, Leonas was a soldier in the 16th Lithuanian division. After the war, he moved to the West Germany. Until 1954, he worked as a press officer at the Embassy of United States in Germany, later he became a freelance journalist and writer. His house was demolished when the Soviets started the constructions of the Centre of Culture.

The memorial in Kaušėnai. Jakovas Bunka, the last jewish in Plungė, got the permission to establish a memorial in Kaušėnai in 1986. In that year, he received a government permission to build the first oak sculpture made by himself. The statement “*Born to live*” is written on this sculpture in the Lithuanian and Hebrew languages. In the same year, he and his colleagues from the Folk Artists' Union of Lithuania made other sculptures and built them in the Kaušėnai cemetery. The memorial wall reminds the expanded Torah. This memorial wall is made from 1,800 bricks of the demolished synagogue (one brick for each victim). The names and surnames of all killed Jews are written on the granite plates. By the way, the surnames are written in the Lithuanian language because those people were citizens of Lithuania.

This place is visited not only by the Jews but by the saver as well. Their names are recorded next to those who were murdered here.



Memorial wall in Kaušėnai.
Author of the photo
K. Narkutė – Beniušienė

The Litvak memory garden. The outline of this garden is in the same shape as the territory of Lithuania. The metal sculptures of apple-trees are exposed here and all of them indicate the biggest Lithuanian Jews communities of Alytus, Kalvarija, Plungė, Vabalninkas, Panevėžys, Telšiai until 1941. The garden is sponsored by the children of Jews emigrants from those towns. There are granite monuments with the names of the world-famous Litvak: Hermanas Kalenbachas, Ralfas Steinmanas, Berekas Joselevičius, Dovydas Volfsonas and many others. A Jewish ethnographic farm-museum is going to be established near the garden.



The Litvak memory garden.
Author of the photo
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