Jewish Memory of Horodyshche

The project's digital publication

Project author: Svitlana Liakhovets, NGO Svitarta. 2026

The full version with the map, names, inscriptions and photographs is on the project's website.

Today a large part of the Jewish heritage of Horodyshche has almost disappeared from the urban space. Former synagogues, shops, workshops and dwelling houses were demolished in the Soviet period, and those that survived have changed their purpose. There remain, however, historical documents, archival photographs, individual buildings, the old Jewish cemetery and places of memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

Each of these testimonies opens a separate page of the past, from the everyday life of the community to the tragic events of the 20th century.

The project “Jewish Memory of Horodyshche” brings these materials together in a digital historical route, in order to preserve the memory of people and places, to return little-known pages of history to the public space and to make them accessible to future generations.



Jewish residents of Vilshana before the revolutionary events of 1917.
Archival photograph. Courtesy of Klavdiia Kolesnikova.

The route

1. The former Jewish hospital

The surviving historic building of the hospital built in 1910. Traces of an inscription remain on its façade, testifying to the institution's original purpose.

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2. The site of the former synagogue

The central part of Horodyshche, today's Peace Square. The synagogue stood here; its building was demolished in the 1970s. Its appearance survives in historic photographs.

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3. The Jewish cemetery

The surviving part of the old Jewish cemetery near the bus station. Historic gravestones remain here, keeping the names of several generations of residents.

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4. The mass grave near Mliiv

The mass burial site of the victims of the Nazi shooting of 1942. Today it holds a memorial obelisk and a fenced plot.

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5. The historic centre of Horodyshche

The space of former shops, workshops and houses. In the 20th century the central part of the town was substantially rebuilt.

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6. The talmud-torah

The Jewish elementary school active in 1900. Its exact location and details of its work have not yet been established.

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7. The other synagogues

In 1900 the town counted three synagogues. The location of two of them still has to be established.

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8. Workshops and homes

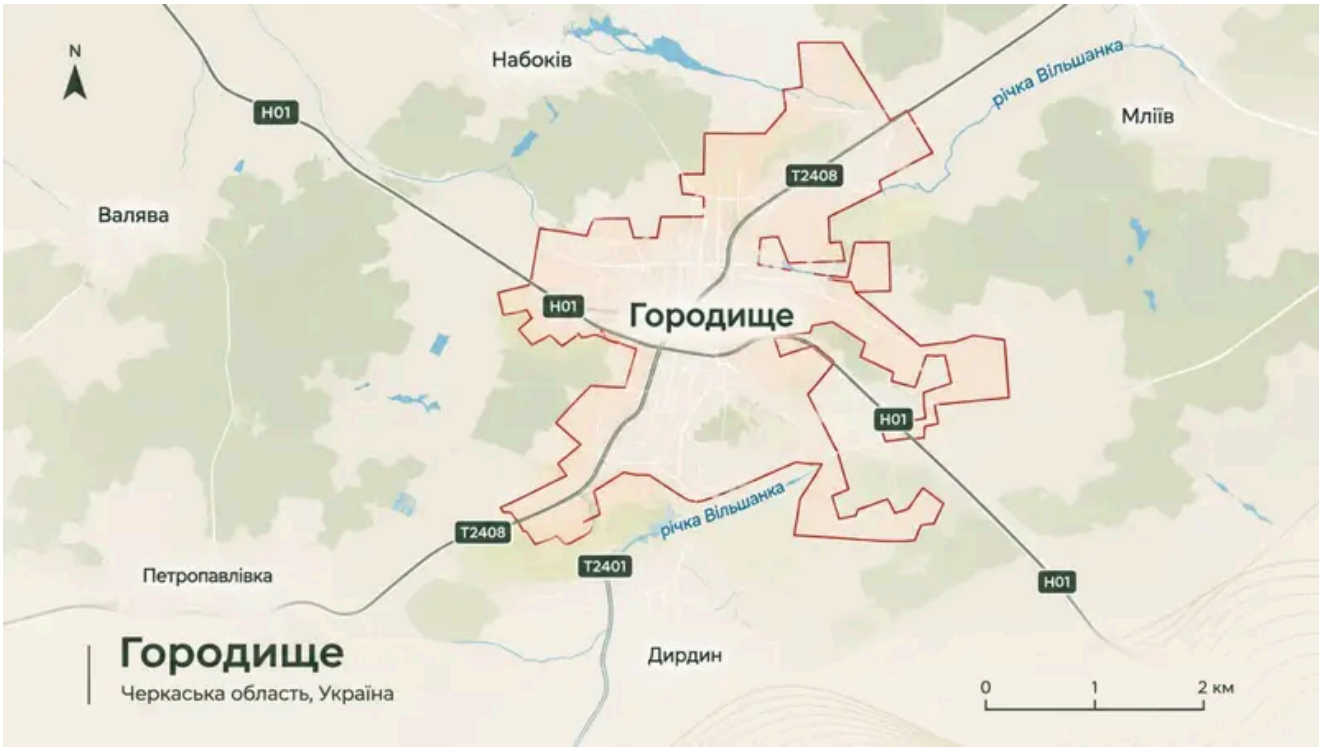
The workshops and homes of Jewish residents, whose exact locations have not yet been established. Older residents still remembered them near today's Peace Square.

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9. The sand quarry

The site of the first mass shooting, 19 September 1941. About 40 Jewish men and teenage boys were killed on the outskirts of the town. Exactly where has not been established.

Horodyshche, a town where histories intertwined



Horodyshche on the map. Cherkasy Oblast, Ukraine.
Project illustration.

Horodyshche lies in central Ukraine, on the banks of the Vilshanka river, a tributary of the Dnipro. Its history is connected with the Cossack era and with the development of crafts, trade and industry. Written sources mention Horodyshche at the end of the 15th century, and in 1649 it became a sotnia town of the Cherkasy Regiment. Horodyshche later developed as an industrial centre. There were workshops, shops and quarries here. Sugar production, connected with the business activities of the Yakhnenko and Symyrenko families, was of particular importance. The town is also connected with the names of the writer Petro Hulak-Artemovsky and the composer Semen Hulak-Artemovsky.



The sugar works and refinery founded near Horodyshche in 1848 became one of the major industrial enterprises of Right-Bank Ukraine in the 19th century.
State Archive of Cherkasy Oblast, f. R-5799, op. 1, sprava 9, ark. 1. Archival photocopy dated 1848.

Members of various national and religious communities lived in Horodyshche. According to historical information published by Lavrentii Pokhylevych in 1864, the town and the local sugar factory had 9,888 inhabitants. Among them were 6,679 Orthodox Christians, 3,064 Jews, 130 Roman Catholics and 15 Old Believers. The Jewish community thus made up about 31% of the population, almost every third inhabitant of the town.

Jewish families lived here for generations, engaged in trade and crafts, and created their own educational, religious and communal institutions. Their life was an inseparable part of the history of Horodyshche.

In the 20th century pogroms, wars, the Holocaust and social transformations radically changed the life of the community. Many historic buildings disappeared, while the memory of the people has survived in documents, photographs and burial places.

It is these testimonies that became the basis of the project “Jewish Memory of Horodyshche”.

The Jewish community: history and everyday life

The testimony of Mykhailo Kamenetsky

An important source on the life of the Jewish community of Horodyshche and on the tragedy of the Holocaust is the memoir of Mykhailo Kamenetsky, published in 1995 in the newspaper «Nadezhda» under the title “My Shtetl”.

The author recalls pre-war Horodyshche, the occupations of its Jewish inhabitants, the shootings near Mliiv and his own family tragedy.

> “The town of Horodyshche in Cherkasy Oblast was in the past a typical Ukrainian shtetl, where a considerable number of Jews lived. Even before the Patriotic War, old-timers asserted that before the revolution several thousand Jews lived in Horodyshche, and among them there were even seven merchants of the 1st guild.
>
> Jews took the most active part in the life and economic development of the town. Among them were doctors, teachers, lawyers. There were many craftsmen of various kinds, namely: blacksmiths, roofers, tinsmiths, shoemakers, barbers, dental technicians, tailors, glaziers, draymen, cab drivers, slaughterers of livestock and others. There were private mills and hundreds of shops.
>
> Before the beginning of the war up to 500 Jews lived in Horodyshche. Men of conscription age went to the front. A small number were evacuated. And the remaining 400 people, among them old people, women and children, were shot by the German occupiers and their accomplices in April 1942 on the outskirts of the village of Mliiv. I lost my parents, my brother and my sister then.
>
> Only Jews who had returned from the army and from evacuation looked after the mass grave. The Soviet authorities took a neutral position.
>
> At present 16 Jews live in Horodyshche, half of them pensioners.”

Mykhailo Kamenetsky. “My Shtetl”. Newspaper «Nadezhda», 1995, No. 5. Translated from Russian. The number of victims and other details reflect the author’s testimony as published in 1995.



A historic building in the centre of Horodyshche that housed a newspaper office and a printing press. According to local historians, in March 1917 a soldier named Ivanov announced the fall of the tsarist government from its balcony.
The house was demolished in the second half of the 1980s.
Archival photograph courtesy of the Petro and Semen Hulak-Artemovsky Local History Museum, Horodyshche.



A historic building in the centre of Horodyshche that housed a newspaper office and a printing press. According to local historians, in March 1917 a soldier named Ivanov announced the fall of the tsarist government from its balcony.
The house was demolished in the second half of the 1980s.
Archival photograph courtesy of the Petro and Semen Hulak-Artemovsky Local History Museum, Horodyshche.



Present-day buildings in the centre of Horodyshche, on the site of the former trading rows.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

A community that was part of the town

The exact date of the arrival of the first Jewish inhabitants in Horodyshche remains unestablished. It is known, however, that during the 19th century the Jewish community became a significant part of the population and of the town's life.

According to statistical data given in the Russian Jewish Encyclopaedia, 3,124 Jews lived in Horodyshche in 1897, 21.3% of the total of 14,641 inhabitants. For 1910 the source gives 3,216 Jews, or 19.5% of the population.

This was an organised community with its own religious, educational, medical and charitable institutions. Historical evidence has survived about the synagogues, a Jewish school, a hospital, trading establishments, craft workshops and the everyday life of Jewish families.

> "The Jews lived as a densely built-up, separate community; the houses stood very close to one another. They had no gardens or land to cultivate. The interior furnishings depended on the occupations of the owners."

Volodymyr Chos (1971–2020), Ukrainian journalist, writer and local historian, researcher of the history of Horodyshche and the Horodyshche area. Translated from Ukrainian.

Jewish communities existed not only in Horodyshche but also in the surrounding settlements. According to data given by Mykola Shcherbyna on the basis of 19th-century statistical

descriptions, in 1852 Jews made up about 32% of the population of Vilshana. In 1864 Jewish inhabitants also lived in Mliiv, Orlovets, Svynarka, Buda and Viazivok.



Mikhlia, Iona, Mirra and Idel Husid, Horodyshche, 1903–1904. Photo from the collection of the Institute of Judaica, Kyiv.



Hanna Holodovska (seated) with her brother Nukhym and her friend Sonia Brusylovska, Horodyshche, 1920. Photo from the collection of the Institute of Judaica, Kyiv.

The Jewish community: facts and figures

1897	3,124 Jews, or 21.3% of the population of Horodyshche, according to the first general census of the Russian Empire.
1910	3,216 Jews, or 19.5% of the town's population.
1900	three synagogues and a talmud-torah, a traditional Jewish primary school.
1910	construction of the Jewish hospital, which provided medical care, in particular to poor members of the community.
1939	about 500–600 Jews lived in Horodyshche, according to published historical information. The decline in the size of the community was connected, in particular, with the pogroms, migration and the social changes of the preceding decades.

Sources: First General Census of the Russian Empire (1897); Russian Jewish Encyclopaedia, article “Horodyshche of Cherkasy Oblast”; Ukraine Jewish Heritage, “Horodyshche” (2016).

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

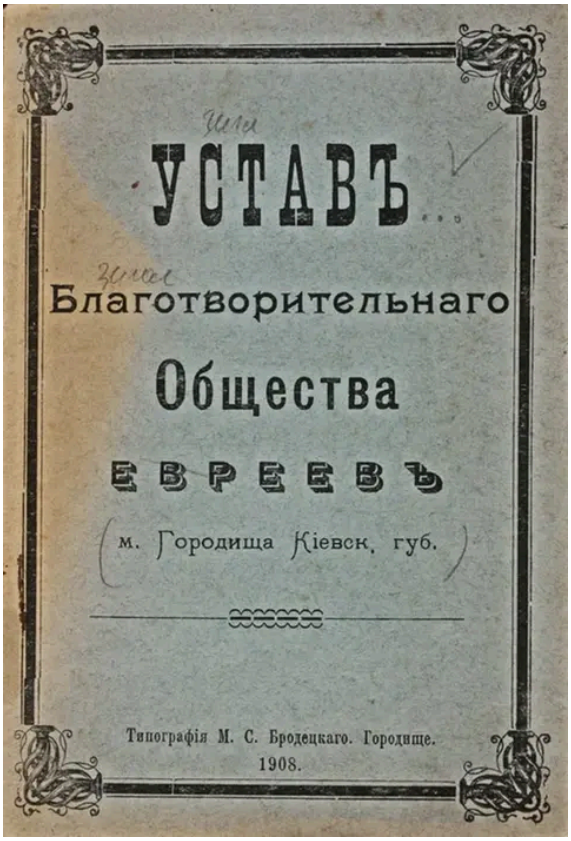
Size of the Jewish community

Date / topic	Information from the first document
1897	3,124 Jews, 21.3% of the population of Horodyshche
1910	3,216 Jews, 19.5% of the population
1923	1,200 Jewish residents
1939	According to different sources, 510 or 570 Jews; elsewhere in the document summarised as about 500–600

According to the statistics given in the first document.

The Jewish charitable society and book printing

In the early 20th century Jewish communal initiatives were active in Horodyshche. The holdings of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine mention the “Statute of the Charitable Society of Jews in the Town of Horodyshche, Kyiv Governorate”, published in Horodyshche in 1908. It was printed by the printing house of M. S. Brodetsky.


УСТАВЪ
Благотворительнаго
Общества
ЕВРЕЕВЪ
м. Городища Кіевск. губ.
Типографія М. С. Бродецкаго. Городище.
1908.

Statute of the Jewish Charitable Society in the town of Horodyshche, Kyiv Governorate. Horodyshche: M. S. Brodetsky's press, 1908.

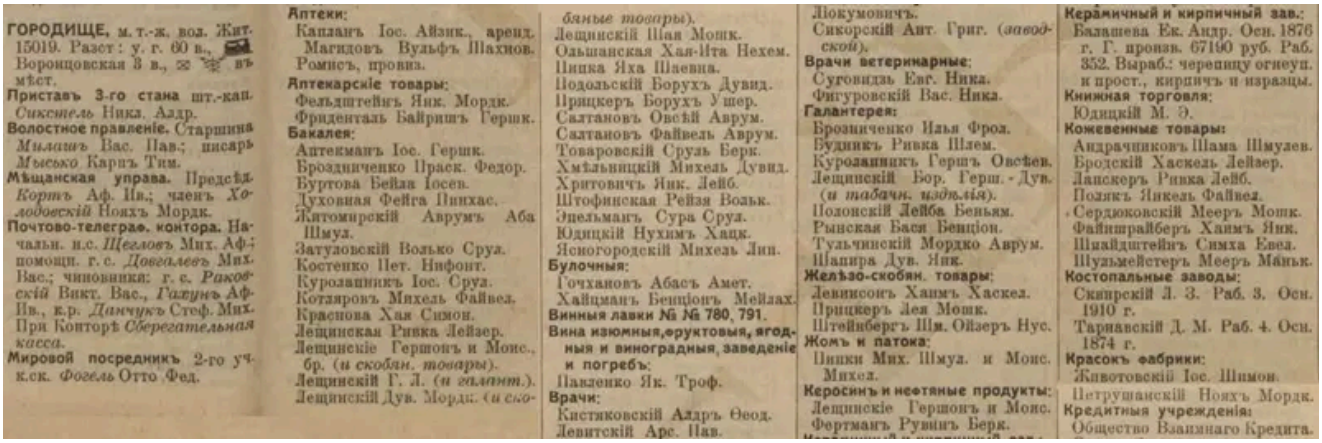
Courtesy of Klavdiia Kolesnikova. Source: Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, Judaica department exhibition "Jewish Public Organisations in the Russian Empire, Late 19th to Early 20th Century. Statutes and Reports", 2016.

Trade, crafts, work

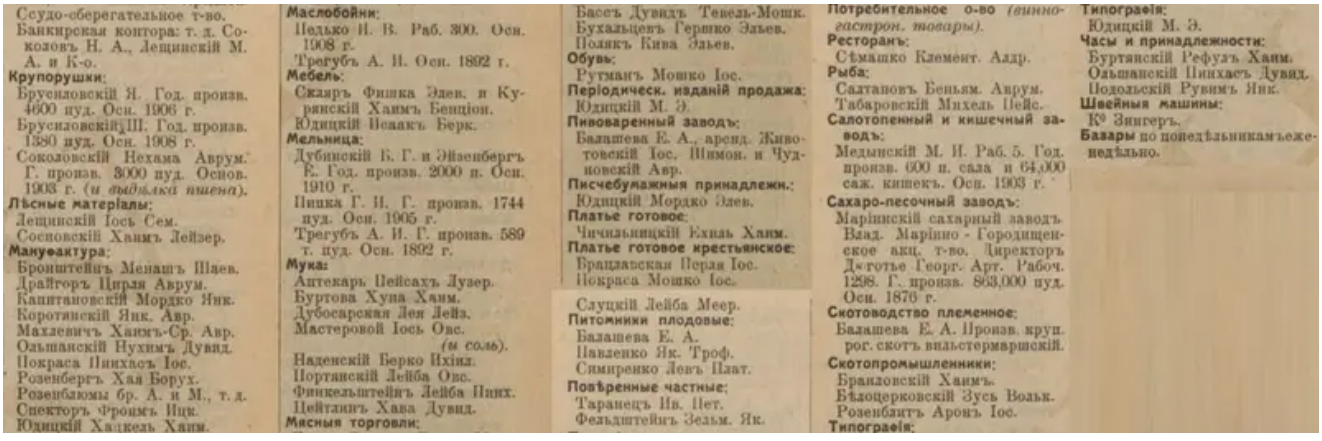
In the 19th and early 20th centuries the central part of Horodyshche was the centre of the town's commercial, craft, communal and religious life. Shops, workshops, dwelling houses and religious buildings were located here. Members of various national and religious communities lived and worked in a shared urban space.

Jewish inhabitants took an active part in the economic life of Horodyshche. Their trading establishments and workshops were located, in particular, near present-day Peace Square. Business directories of the Russian Empire for 1913 contain information about local trade and enterprise. Archival documents also mention projects for the construction of A. L.-L. Shapiro's soap works in 1911 and of the mill of the townsman Ye. K. Yerusalymsky in 1912–1913.

Before the revolutionary events of 1917, a Jewish bakery operated in the basement of the building that then stood on the site of the present-day Zhovten cinema in Horodyshche. This is another example of the participation of Jewish inhabitants in the craft and economic life of the town.



Horodyshche entrepreneurs listed in the business directories of the Russian Empire for 1913, part 1.
Source: History of Jewish Communities in Ukraine, jewua.org/horodyshche.



Horodyshche entrepreneurs listed in the business directories of the Russian Empire for 1913, part 2.
Source: History of Jewish Communities in Ukraine, jewua.org/horodyshche.

Today the historic centre of Horodyshche looks entirely different. The synagogues, the talmud-torah, the shops and the private houses have not survived. Archival photographs and documents remain important evidence of how trade, work, and the religious and everyday life of the inhabitants of Horodyshche intertwined in a shared urban space.



The trading row in the centre of Horodyshche, 1965. Part of the town's historic fabric, demolished in the 1968 reconstruction of the centre.
Source: the book Horodyshche in Documents and Photographs, p. 123.



The centre of Horodyshche.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.



The centre of Horodyshche.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

Religious life

The religious life of Horodyshche reflected the diversity of its population. Alongside the Orthodox churches and the Catholic church, there were Jewish synagogues, which were important centres of the religious and communal life of the local Jewish community. According to historical information, there were three synagogues in the town in 1900.

One of them stood in the very centre of Horodyshche, on the site of present-day Peace Square. Its appearance has been preserved in historical photographs. In photographs of the central square from the 1960s, part of the building can be seen on the right. A photograph of the Horodyshche Jewish self-defence unit is also associated with the synagogue.

The location of the other two remains unestablished. However, local historians say that, according to oral tradition, the second synagogue stood near the Jewish hospital, and the third in the area of the present-day district hospital, not far from the old Jewish cemetery.

In the 1970s the synagogue was demolished. In 1968 the central part of Horodyshche underwent large-scale reconstruction, during which a large part of the old buildings disappeared, including the former Jewish shops, workshops and dwelling houses.

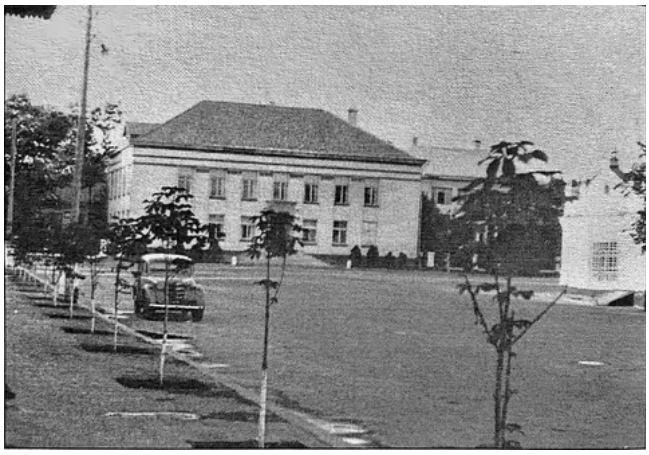
Today none of the three historic synagogues of Horodyshche has survived. Archival photographs and local history testimonies help to reconstruct this lost part of the town’s religious and architectural past.



The historic synagogue building in the centre of Horodyshche, on the site of today's Peace Square. In the Soviet period the building was put to other uses. It was demolished in the 1970s.
Archival photograph courtesy of the Petro and Semen Hulak-Artemovsky Local History Museum, Horodyshche.



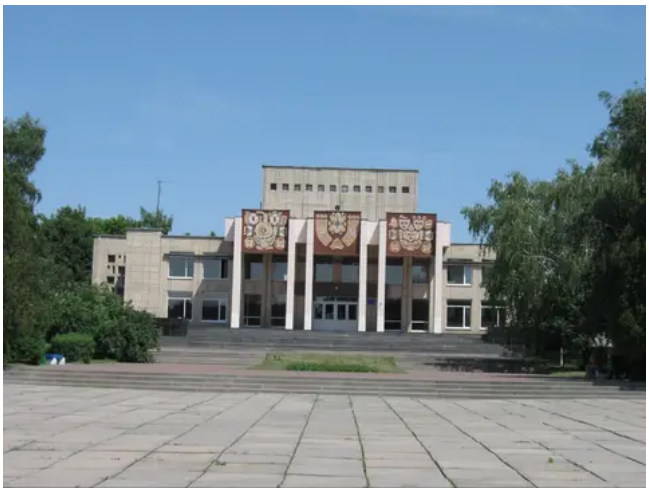
Lenin Square (now Peace Square) in Horodyshche. On the right of the photograph is a fragment of the former Jewish synagogue, demolished in the 1970s.
Source: Mykola Panasenko, a local-history publication on Horodyshche.



Lenin Square (now Peace Square) in Horodyshche. Newly planted chestnut trees. On the right, the frame preserves a fragment of the Jewish synagogue that was once part of the town centre's historic fabric.
Source: Mykola Panasenko, a local-history publication on Horodyshche.



Peace Square in Horodyshche today. The Jewish synagogue, demolished in the 1970s, once stood on this ground.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.



Peace Square in Horodyshche today.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.



Peace Square in Horodyshche today.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.



The memorial on Peace Square in Horodyshche.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Synagogues and religious life

Date / topic	Information from the first document
1900	Horodyshche had three synagogues; a talmud-torah was operating
Town centre	One synagogue stood on the site of today's Peace Square
The two other synagogues	The exact location has not been established; there are local accounts of possible sites
Today	None of the three historic synagogues survives

The location of two of the three synagogues remains unknown.

Education

Education was an important component of the development of Horodyshche. In the 19th century, along with industrial growth, there arose a need to teach children and to train qualified workers.

The Yakhnenko and Symyrenko families of entrepreneurs played a particular role in the development of education. At the Horodyshche industrial complex there were schools for workers' children, a library and later also a Sunday school for adults. In 1857 a school was opened at the entrepreneurs' expense, in which teaching followed the curriculum of technical schools.

The Jewish community also had its own educational institutions. According to historical information, a talmud-torah was active in Horodyshche in 1900, a Jewish primary school in which children received a religious education.



A Jewish teacher with her pupils.
Photo courtesy of Klavdiia Kolesnikova.



Tuchynsky, director of the Jewish school, shows newly acquired physics instruments to the best pupils of the seventh grade. Korsun-Shevchenkivskyi, 1930s.
Archival photograph. Source: the memoir "One Bread Fed Us... Echoes of the Shtetl in My Life".
Photo courtesy of Klavdiia Kolesnikova.

Educational life in Horodyshche thus developed in different directions, from general and vocational training to study in religious institutions.

The exact location of the Horodyshche talmud-torah and detailed information about its activity have not yet been established.

Medicine and mutual aid

The development of medicine in Horodyshche was connected with the growth of the town, its industry and its public institutions.

In the middle of the 19th century there were a hospital and a pharmacy for workers at the Yakhnenko and Symyrenko industrial complex near Mliiv. Medical care was part of the social infrastructure created by the entrepreneurs, which also included housing, schools and other everyday facilities.

In the early 20th century there was also a Jewish hospital in Horodyshche. According to materials from Ukraine Jewish Heritage, in 1910 it had six beds, was funded from communal tax revenues and provided free care to poor Jewish inhabitants.

In 1912 the hospital became a zemstvo hospital. A pharmacy and a pharmaceutical warehouse operated there.

The archival inventories of the State Archive of Kyiv Oblast preserve a file from 1908–1909 on the approval of a project to extend the Jewish hospital. It indicates that the history of this institution began before 1910.



The former Jewish hospital in Horodyshche, built in 1910. The façade keeps its historic inscription “Jewish Hospital. 1910”, partly damaged in the Soviet period. The building survives to this day.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

The building of the Jewish hospital, built in 1910, has survived to the present day. Traces of a historical inscription are still visible on the façade, including the word “Jewish”, damaged in Soviet times.

Archival documents also attest to the activity of a Jewish charitable society in Horodyshche in the early 20th century. In particular, a description of its report for 1909 has survived.

These institutions were part of the development of medicine and organised mutual aid in Horodyshche.



The gable end with its attic window.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.



The inscription from below: the word “БОЛЬНИЦА.” (hospital) survives.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

History of the Jewish hospital

Date / topic	Information from the first document
1908–1909	The inventories of the State Archive of Kyiv Oblast contain a file on approving the project to expand the Jewish hospital
1910	The hospital had six beds and gave free care to poor Jewish residents
1910	The hospital building survives with a historic inscription on its façade
1912	The hospital became a zemstvo hospital; it had a pharmacy and a pharmacy store

The archival materials and photographs relate to different stages of the hospital’s work.

Surviving and lost places of Jewish life

Before the large-scale rebuilding of the 20th century, the central part of Horodyshche looked entirely different. Along the main street, in particular on the site of present-day Peace Square and towards the bus station, stood the dwelling houses, shops and workshops of Jewish inhabitants. They were part of the town's shared commercial and communal space.

In 1968 a large-scale reconstruction of the centre of Horodyshche took place. The old trading rows, including the former Jewish shops and workshops, were demolished, Peace Square was laid out, new roads were built and administrative buildings were erected.

The local historian Volodymyr Chos notes in his book "Horodyshche, My Native Town" (2017) that during the Cold War the town was regarded as a reserve command centre for Cherkasy Oblast in case of emergency, in particular a war between the USSR and the USA.

As a result of the rebuilding, the historic centre of Horodyshche changed substantially, and a large part of the architectural heritage of the Jewish community was lost. Today the former trading rows are recalled by archival photographs and the memories of inhabitants.



The house known in the publication as the Saltanov house, in the centre of Horodyshche, photographed during the 1968 reconstruction of the town.
Archival photograph.

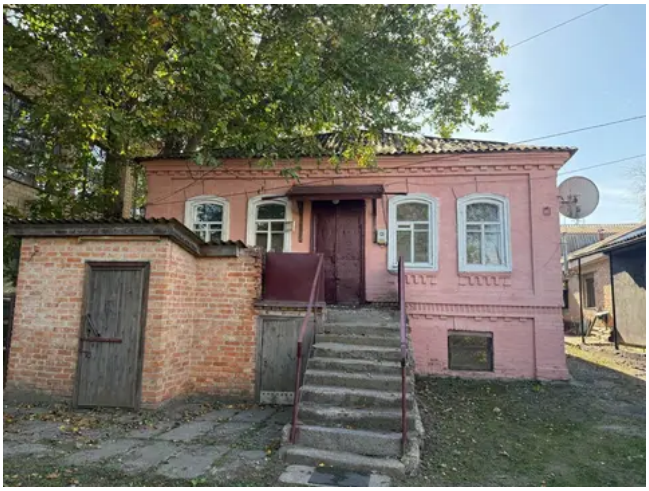
The house of Isai Kurochka

One of the surviving historic buildings of Horodyshche is known to townspeople as the Saltanov house. According to local history testimony, it was built by Isai Isaiovych Kurochka, a Jewish inhabitant of the town.

The house was intended for a large family. As the children grew up and started families of their own, it was gradually enlarged and extended.

Later Heorhii Saltanov, who married Isai Kurochka's daughter Mariia, settled in the house. He was engaged in trade, had a wholesale warehouse and was well known in Horodyshche. Over time the house came to be called by his surname.

During the Second World War Isai Kurochka went missing. Some members of the family were evacuated and survived the war.



The historic building known as the Kurochka house, which survives in Horodyshche to this day. As it looks today.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.



The historic building known as the Kurochka house, which survives in Horodyshche to this day. As it looks today.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

In the post-war period the building housed at various times a bakery, a sewing workshop and an art workshop. Later the house was returned to the descendants of the Kurochka family.



A sewing workshop in the former house of Isai Isaiovych Kurochka, also known as Heorhii Saltanov's house. Horodyshche, the post-war period.
Archival photograph courtesy of the Petro and Semen Hulak-Artemovsky Local History Museum, Horodyshche.

The building has survived to the present day and remains a testimony to the history of a Jewish family whose life was bound up with Horodyshche.

As told by Alla Viktorivna Sukhoruchenko, director of the Petro and Semen Hulak-Artemovsky Horodyshche Local History Museum. Recorded by Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

Other surviving houses in Horodyshche

> "Several houses that once belonged to Jewish families have still survived in Horodyshche. They are located mainly along the former central trading street.
>
> For example, near the present-day police station there is an old house which, according to local memories, also belonged to a Jewish family. Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to establish who exactly its owner was. These buildings are part of the history of Horodyshche, a memory of the people who lived and worked here."

Alla Sukhoruchenko, director of the Petro and Semen Hulak-Artemovsky Horodyshche Local History Museum. Recorded by Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026. Translated from Ukrainian.

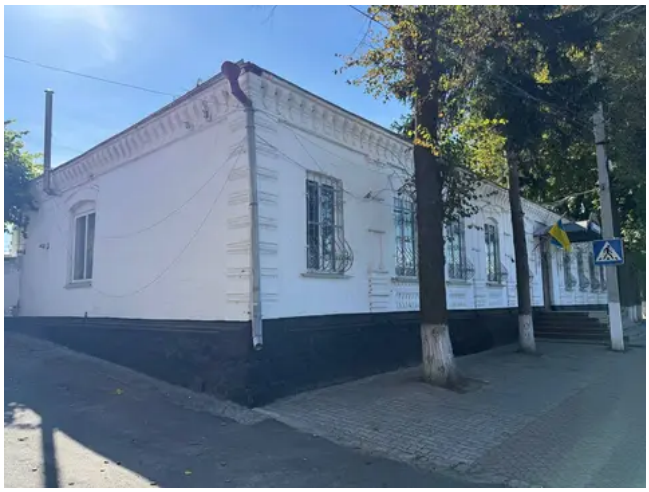


A surviving historic building near today's police station. Buildings that recall the town as earlier generations knew it, as they look today.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

These houses are part of the architectural and family history of Horodyshche. Further research on them may help to establish the names of their owners, the former purpose of the premises and their connection with the life of the Jewish community.



Surviving historic buildings in Horodyshche, which recall the town as earlier generations knew it, as they look today.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.



Surviving historic buildings in Horodyshche, which recall the town as earlier generations knew it, as they look today.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

Archival records of the Jewish community

The State Archive of Cherkasy Oblast holds 19th-century documents of the Jewish community of Horodyshche. According to the research of the local historian Mykola Shcherbyna, 12 archival files from 1846–1862 are known. Among the materials of this period are metrical books with records of births, marriages and other events of family life, as well as documents connected with communal and tax matters.

These sources make it possible to study the history of the Jewish population of Horodyshche through specific documents that have survived to our time.

The Jewish cemetery

The Jewish cemetery of Horodyshche is located near the present-day bus station. It is one of the most important places of memory of the generations of Jewish inhabitants of the town.

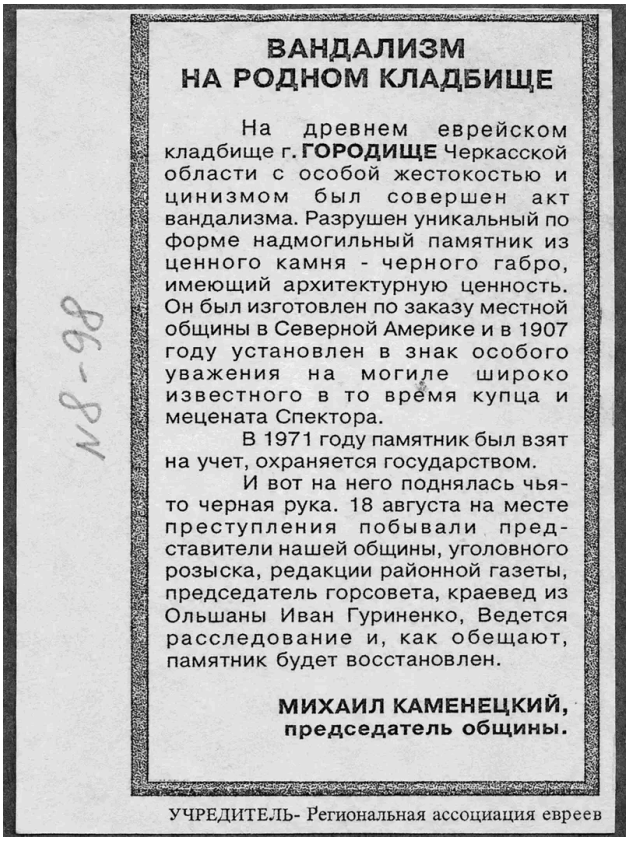
Before the Second World War the cemetery occupied a larger area. In the post-war period a large part of the old cemetery was destroyed. A bus station, a petrol station and a road were placed on part of its former territory.

Several dozen gravestones remain on the surviving part of the cemetery.



The cemetery today: an open field, grass, scattered stones.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

A separate report on the condition of the old Jewish cemetery has survived in a newspaper publication, “Vandalism at Our Native Cemetery”, signed by Mykhailo Kamenetsky as head of the community. According to the text of the newspaper clipping, a gravestone of black gabbro was erected in 1907 on the grave of the merchant and patron Spektor. The order, as the publication states, was carried out in North America. In 1971 the monument was placed on the state register. The publication reports its destruction as a result of vandalism and the opening of an investigation.



ВАНДАЛИЗМ
НА РОДНОМ КЛАДБИЩЕ

На древнем еврейском кладбище г. **ГОРОДИЩЕ** Черкасской области с особой жестокостью и цинизмом был совершен акт вандализма. Разрушен уникальный по форме надмогильный памятник из ценного камня - черного габро, имеющий архитектурную ценность. Он был изготовлен по заказу местной общины в Северной Америке и в 1907 году установлен в знак особого уважения на могиле широко известного в то время купца и мецената Спектора.

В 1971 году памятник был взят на учет, охраняется государством.

И вот на него поднялась чья-то черная рука. 18 августа на месте преступления побывали представители нашей общины, уголовного розыска, редакции районной газеты, председатель горсовета, краевед из Ольшаны Иван Гуриненко, Ведется расследование и, как обещают, памятник будет восстановлен.

МИХАИЛ КАМЕНЕЦКИЙ,
председатель общины.

УЧРЕДИТЕЛЬ- Региональная ассоциация евреев

The article “Vandalism at Our Own Cemetery” on the destruction of the gravestone of Spektor, a Jewish merchant and patron, at the old Jewish cemetery of Horodyshche. The black gabbro monument was erected in 1907 and taken under state protection in 1971.
Written by Mykhailo Kamenetsky, head of the Jewish community. Archival clipping from the newspaper Nadezhda, no. 8, 1998.

The inscriptions on the matzevot, traditional Jewish gravestones, contain the names of the buried, family relationships, dates of death, religious formulas and epitaphs.

The surnames recorded in research include Furman, Shternberg, Arkhanhorodsky, Brodsky and others.



The Jewish cemetery in Horodyshche.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.



The Jewish cemetery in Horodyshche.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

These gravestones are valuable sources for the study of the family and social history of the Jewish community of Horodyshche.

According to materials from Ukraine Jewish Heritage, in 2009 a memorial marker to the victims of the Holocaust was erected on the surviving part of the old cemetery.

The cemetery preserves the memory not only of individual people but also of an entire community that was part of the town for many generations.



A broken matzevah. The Hebrew inscription is clearly legible.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.



A bilingual slab in Hebrew and Russian: “Khaskel Leizerov Brodsky”.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

History of the Jewish cemetery

Date / topic	Information from the first document
Before the Second World War	The cemetery covered a larger area
After the war	Much of the old cemetery was destroyed; a bus station, a petrol station and a road were built on the former grounds
1907	According to a newspaper article, a black gabbro monument was placed on the grave of the merchant and patron Spektor
1971	According to the same article, the monument was placed on the state register
Today	Several dozen gravestones survive

Some of the information comes from a newspaper article about the Spektor monument.

Pogroms, wars and the destruction of the community

The history of the Jewish community of Horodyshche in the 20th century was marked by pogroms, wars, forced displacement, the destruction of settled life and mass killings during the Holocaust.

Changes in the size of the community in the early 20th century

At the beginning of the 20th century the Jewish community made up a significant part of the population of Horodyshche. According to the Russian Jewish Encyclopaedia, 3,124 Jews lived here in 1897, and 3,216 in 1910.

In the following decades the size of the community declined substantially. In 1923 there were 1,200 Jewish inhabitants in Horodyshche, and in 1939, according to different sources, 510 or 570.

These changes were influenced by pogroms, migration and social and political transformations. The statistics, however, do not make it possible to establish exactly how many people were killed and how many left the town.

The pogroms and the Jewish self-defence of Horodyshche in 1919–1920

During the years of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 the Horodyshche area became an arena of struggle between various political and military forces. Bolshevik troops, White Guard formations and Ukrainian anti-Bolshevik insurgent detachments were active in the region.

The military confrontation was accompanied by violence against the civilian population. The Jewish community of Horodyshche suffered pogroms more than once.

Evidence of these events has survived in the documents of relief organisations for the victims, in the archive of the historian Elias Tcherikower, in local history research and in the memories of local inhabitants.

The pogroms of 1919

On 11–12 May 1919, during the anti-Bolshevik uprising of ataman Nykyfor Hryhoriiv, a pogrom of the Jewish population took place in Horodyshche.

According to the report of the Red Cross representative Yu. Leshchynsky, seven people were killed, three were wounded and 135 houses were damaged. Jewish shops and homes were looted.

The archive of the historian Elias Tcherikower preserves a handwritten list, in Yiddish, of the victims of the May pogroms in Horodyshche and its surroundings. Among the names listed are Rivka Bilotserkovska, Etel Dinershtein, Leia Tryhub, Rakhel Sosnovska, Leib Kohan and others. The list also mentions people killed in the surrounding settlements.

At the end of May the town was looted again, in connection with Red Army soldiers. In August 1919, after the retreat of the Bolshevik troops, the inhabitants of Horodyshche organised a joint guard for the town.

According to the testimony of the eyewitness Zeides, it included 50 Jews and 20 Christians. Seventy rifles were left for the protection of the population. A Committee of Public Safety, which included representatives of different communities, was also active.

However, after the arrival of Cossack units of General Anton Denikin's Volunteer Army, the local guard was disarmed. The town again suffered pogrom violence, robberies and killings. Zeides's testimony mentions eight people killed during the August events.

The events of 1920: the insurgent movement and the Jewish self-defence

In 1920 the armed struggle against Bolshevik rule continued in the Horodyshche area. One of its participants was ataman Trokhym Holyi (Babenko), who led a Ukrainian insurgent detachment.

In September 1920 Horodyshche suffered another Jewish pogrom. The documents of the relief committee for the victims connect the attack with the detachment of ataman Holyi.

Testimonies of the time describe killings, woundings, sexual violence and the robbery of civilians. The exact number of those killed remains unestablished.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The pogroms of 1919–1920

Date / topic	Information from the first document
11–12 May 1919	According to Yu. Leshchynsky's report, seven people were killed, three wounded and 135 houses damaged
August 1919	Zeides's testimony mentions eight killed during the August events
September 1920	A pogrom against the Jews of Horodyshche; the documents of the relief committee link the attack to the band of otaman Trokhym Holyi
Number killed in September 1920	The reference document states plainly that the exact number of those killed remains unknown

The number killed in September 1920 has not been established.

At the same time, armed formations that supported Bolshevik rule and fought the insurgents were active in Horodyshche. One of them was a detachment known as the "Krasni mstiteli" ("Red Avengers"), which called itself a self-defence unit.



The Jewish self-defence unit of Horodyshche, probably 1920–1923. Different publications identify the place as the synagogue building or Lishchynsky's shop by St Michael's Church.
Original first owned by Mykhailo Kamenetsky, now held by Klavdiia Kolesnikova.

Volodymyr Chos's book "Horodyshche: The Great History of a Small Town" includes material by the local historian Andrii Tehereshvili on the activity of this detachment.

According to his information, the formation numbered about 100–150 people and consisted of local communists, activists, shopkeepers, craftsmen, clerks and hired labourers.

The commander of the detachment was San Isakovych Dinershtein, and the commissar was the militiaman Vorona.

Among the members the researcher names Pantia and Lazar Begelfer, members of the Buriachkov family, Lev Kruhliak, Borys Kotliar, Borukh Maistrovyi, Kaminsky and other local inhabitants.

A letter from O. V. Yelansky cited by Tehereshvili mentions a Jewish self-defence detachment of 400 people. The researcher himself notes that this figure is exaggerated.

The memoirs of Mykhailo Kamenetsky also confirm the existence of an armed Jewish self-defence detachment under Dinershtein's command. According to him, the detachment was subordinate to the Cherkasy Cheka and took part in the fight against Holyi's insurgents.

Violence during the fight against the insurgents

The armed confrontation in the Horodyshche area was not limited to clashes between military formations.

Andrii Tehereshvili's material contains information about the taking of hostages and shootings in a sand quarry near Horodyshche, which the author connects with the actions of the "Krasni mstiteli" detachment.

According to the testimonies he cites, up to 200 people may have been executed there.

The book also contains memories of other cases of violence, the deaths of local inhabitants and the use of armed units of the Red Cavalry to fight the insurgents.

These materials testify to the brutality of the armed confrontation, but they require further research to establish the circumstances of individual killings and the responsibility of specific persons.

The history of the Horodyshche self-defence thus has several interconnected aspects: the protection of the Jewish population from pogroms, the participation of some inhabitants in the armed struggle on the side of Bolshevik rule, and testimonies of violence against civilians during the suppression of the insurgent movement.

Mykhailo Kamenetsky's testimony about the self-defence

The local inhabitant Mykhailo Kamenetsky left memoirs about the Horodyshche Jewish self-defence.

In the article "The Jews Defended Themselves", published in the newspaper «Nadezhda» in 1997, he wrote:

> "A large Jewish self-defence detachment was created in Horodyshche. The commander was a Jew, Sanyk Di(y)nershtein, the commissar was a Ukrainian, Vorona. The detachment's headquarters was in my father's house. My father and uncle were its fighters.
>
> The self-defence detachment was subordinate to the Cherkasy Cheka. In Horodyshche it waged an armed struggle to destroy Holyi's band. It took part in the fight against bandits in other districts of the Cherkasy region as well. Holyi's band was based in the village of Mliiv and the surrounding forests, 12 km from the town of Horodyshche.
>
> Holyi's brother, and with him a colonel of the tsarist army, were captured in the village of Buda-Orlovets, after the guard had first been removed."

Mykhailo Kamenetsky. "The Jews Defended Themselves". Newspaper «Nadezhda», 1997, No. 8. Translated from Russian. The description of the insurgents as a "band" reflects the position of the memoir's author and is not used as an editorial judgement.

The information about the joint guard of Horodyshche in August 1919 and about the detachment described by Kamenetsky and Tehereshvili comes from different sources. Whether there was organisational continuity between them has not yet been established.

The interwar decades

The pogroms of 1919–1920 led to loss of life, the destruction of households and the forced displacement of some of the Jewish inhabitants of Horodyshche. Despite the tragedies it had endured, the community continued to exist in the 1920s and 1930s.

In this period its life changed under the influence of Soviet policy, economic transformations and migration. Some Jewish families left for other regions, and the traditional forms of communal and religious life gradually changed.

In the 1920s the Soviet authorities pursued a policy of resettling the Jewish population. This was promoted by the All-Ukrainian Society for the Land Settlement of Working Jews, OZET. According to the research of Mykola Shcherbyna, one of its 19 branches in the Cherkasy region operated in Horodyshche. Jewish families resettled, in particular, to Crimea, Zaporizhzhia, the Kryvyi Rih district and Birobidzhan.

According to published statistical data, in 1939, according to different figures, 510 or 570 Jews lived in Horodyshche, approximately 4% of the town's population.

The Holodomor of 1932–1933. The building of the former Torgsin

The Holodomor of 1932–1933, caused by the policy of the Stalinist regime, was a tragedy for the population of Ukraine, including Horodyshche and the surrounding villages. Famine and the struggle for survival affected the life of the town as a whole: Ukrainian, Jewish and other families who lived side by side, worked together and formed a single town community.

According to data given in the National Book of Memory of the Victims of the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine (Cherkasy Oblast), about 713 people died in Horodyshche. The compiled martyrology has established 173 names. Among those who died of famine are Vira, Ivan and Pavlo Prokopenko, the young children Hanna and Yevdokiia Snisar, Serhii Sukach and other inhabitants of the town.

In the years of the Holodomor, one way of obtaining food was to turn to the state trading network Torgsin ("Trade with Foreigners"). People handed in gold and silver jewellery, wedding rings and other family valuables in order to buy flour, groats and other foodstuffs.

A building has survived in Horodyshche where, according to local history information, a Torgsin shop operated in the 1930s. The people of Horodyshche brought their valuables here, trying to save themselves and their families from starvation.

This building is a reminder of the shared history of inhabitants of different nationalities and of a tragedy that left its mark on the life of the whole town and of Ukraine as a whole.



The former Torgsin shop in Horodyshche. According to local historians, in the 1930s residents handed in gold, silver and other valuables here in exchange for the chance to buy food. The building survives to this day.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.



The former Torgsin shop in Horodyshche. According to local historians, in the 1930s residents handed in gold, silver and other valuables here in exchange for the chance to buy food. The building survives to this day.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

The Nazi occupation

At the beginning of August 1941 Horodyshche was occupied by German troops.

In the autumn of 1941 a ghetto was established in Horodyshche.

In the first months of the occupation Horodyshche was governed by a German military commandant's office. In December 1941 power passed to the German civil administration, and the town became part of the Smila Gebiet of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine.

Jewish inhabitants were obliged to register, to wear identifying armbands and to perform forced labour, in particular repairing roads and buildings. The inhabitants of the ghetto were forbidden to leave its territory and to buy food from the local population. This led to hunger. The inhabitants found themselves in conditions of isolation, food shortage and the constant threat of violence.

In 1942 the Nazi occupation authorities organised the mass murder of the Jewish population of Horodyshche and the surrounding settlements.

One of the most important pieces of documentary evidence of this crime is the act of the Horodyshche commission of 7 March 1944.

The mass grave near Mliiv

> “The mass extermination of Jews was carried out by the German fascist invaders during the Second World War. Horodyshche, too, has its own ‘Babyn Yar’, where in the summer of 1942 the fascists exterminated a large part of the Jewish population of the town and neighbouring settlements.
>
> The memorial to this tragic event is the obelisk and the mass grave on the Horodyshche – Mliiv highway. Eyewitnesses of this event are still alive. Among them are Halyna Artemenko from Mliiv and Prokip Leleka from Cherkasy.
>
> This is what Halyna Artemenko recalls: ‘The German authorities told all the Jews of Horodyshche to take their valuables and come out onto the road. They promised that they would be sent to Palestine. But it was a deadly trap. That day all the inhabitants of the town were forbidden to go out into the street. Only from an attic, or from afar, from the riverbank, could one see the sad and alarming picture: the column of Jews set off towards the village of Mliiv. And there, before Mliiv, beside the road, they were all shot.’”

The mass murder near Mliiv was not the only crime against the Jewish population of the Horodyshche area. The research materials of Klavdiia Kolesnikova also mention shootings of Jews in Vilshana and Viazivok.

The circumstances of these events require separate research. They show that the Holocaust affected not only Horodyshche but also other settlements of the region.

Excerpt from Mykola Shcherbyna’s article “From the History of the Jewish Communities of the Horodyshche Area”, 16 July 2012. Translated from Ukrainian. Source: horodysche.org.ua/?id=278

The testimony of Nina Laskava

One of the most important testimonies about the tragedy is the account of Nina Rodionivna Laskava, born in 1934. Her family lived opposite the place where the mass grave is now located.

Nina Laskava’s memories were recorded in Mliiv by Yukhym Dyskin. In 2001 they were published in the newspaper «Nadezhda» under the title “Tragedy in Mliiv”.

> “In the spring of 1942 I was in my ninth year. My parents’ house stood right opposite the place where the grave is now, across the road by the kindergarten. We heard then that in Horodyshche the Jews had been gathered at the Chkalov secondary school. They were told that they would be taken to Cherkasy, and from there somewhere by steamer down the Dnipro.”

According to Nina Laskava’s testimony, before the shooting the Germans and local policemen forced men from Mliiv to clear the area and dig a long pit. The next morning a column of more than 300 Jews was brought to the village under armed guard.

> “I saw through the window how they began firing machine guns and people fell into the pit. During the shooting many policemen hid behind our house and shed. One of them covered his ears and wept, but most of them took part in the massacre. They did the shooting themselves, and then finished off the wounded in the pit.”

Nina Laskava also recalled people’s attempts to escape and told of a woman with a child named Mylodanova, who hid under a small bridge but were later killed.

Nina Laskava. Testimony recorded by Yukhym Dyskin. “Tragedy in Mliiv”. Newspaper «Nadezhda», 2001, No. 1. The quotations follow the text of the publication as provided. Translated from Ukrainian.

The Begelfer family

Among the Jewish families of Horodyshche who suffered during the Holocaust was the Begelfer family.

In memories recorded by the local historian Mykola Shcherbyna, Yukhym Lazarevych Begelfer said that his father, Leizer Itskovych Begelfer (1897–1981), worked as a shoemaker, and his mother, Henia Pavlivna (1906–1971), was a housewife. The family lived in the centre of Horodyshche.

At the beginning of the war Leizer Begelfer was mobilised into the Red Army. His elder brother Palti and his family, and his first wife Betia with their son and daughter, remained in occupied Horodyshche.

In 1942 they, together with other Jewish inhabitants of the town, were taken away supposedly for resettlement, but were shot near Mliiv.

After the war the surviving relatives continued to visit the mass grave.

Yukhym Begelfer recalled:

> “My parents and my wife’s parents are buried in Horodyshche, and my wife’s brother in Mliiv. So we visit their graves all the time. We also stop at the mass grave on the outskirts of Mliiv. My relatives are buried in it. Adults and children, innocent victims of the Holocaust.”

From the memories of Yukhym Lazarevych Begelfer, published by Mykola Shcherbyna in the article “‘Babyn Yar’ on the Outskirts of Mliiv-2”, 2013. Translated from Ukrainian.



The Begelfer family in Horodyshche, 1922. Two members of the family were shot near Mliiv.
Source: History of Jewish Communities in Ukraine, jewua.org/horodyshche.

The site of the mass shooting

Near the road from Horodyshche to Mliiv lies the mass burial site of Jews murdered during the Nazi occupation.



The obelisk inside the fenced plot, with a field behind it.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

Archival testimony on the mass shooting of the Jews of the Horodyshche area

On 7 March 1944 the Horodyshche commission for the investigation of the crimes of the Nazi occupiers drew up an act recording the circumstances of the mass murder of the Jewish population of the district.

According to the document, on 29 March 1942 more than 300 Jews, mostly women, children and elderly people, were forcibly assembled at the town police. From there they were led under escort along the Mliiv road to the Sadstantsiia tract, where a ditch had been prepared for the shooting.

The document names the organisers and perpetrators of the crime, describes the circumstances of the murder and the results of the inspection of the mass grave.

The transcription of the act in the archive was made and provided to the project by Klavdiia Kolesnikova, researcher of Jewish history and director of the Regional Museum of Jewish History “We Come from the Shtetl”.

> **Archival document.** The act of the Horodyshche commission of 7 March 1944, full text in the original language. Read the act

Historical publications contain certain discrepancies regarding the exact dating of the final liquidation of the ghetto and of the shooting. The date of 29 March 1942 is therefore given in this project in accordance with the commission's act of 7 March 1944.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Dating the shooting near Mliiv

Date / topic	Information from the first document
29 March 1942	The date given in the act of the Horodyshche commission of 7 March 1944; according to the act, more than 300 Jews were rounded up
April 1942	Mykhailo Kamenetsky's recollections (the newspaper Nadezhda, 1995, no. 5) date the shooting to April 1942
1942	The memorial plaque and the account of the mass grave date the event to 1942

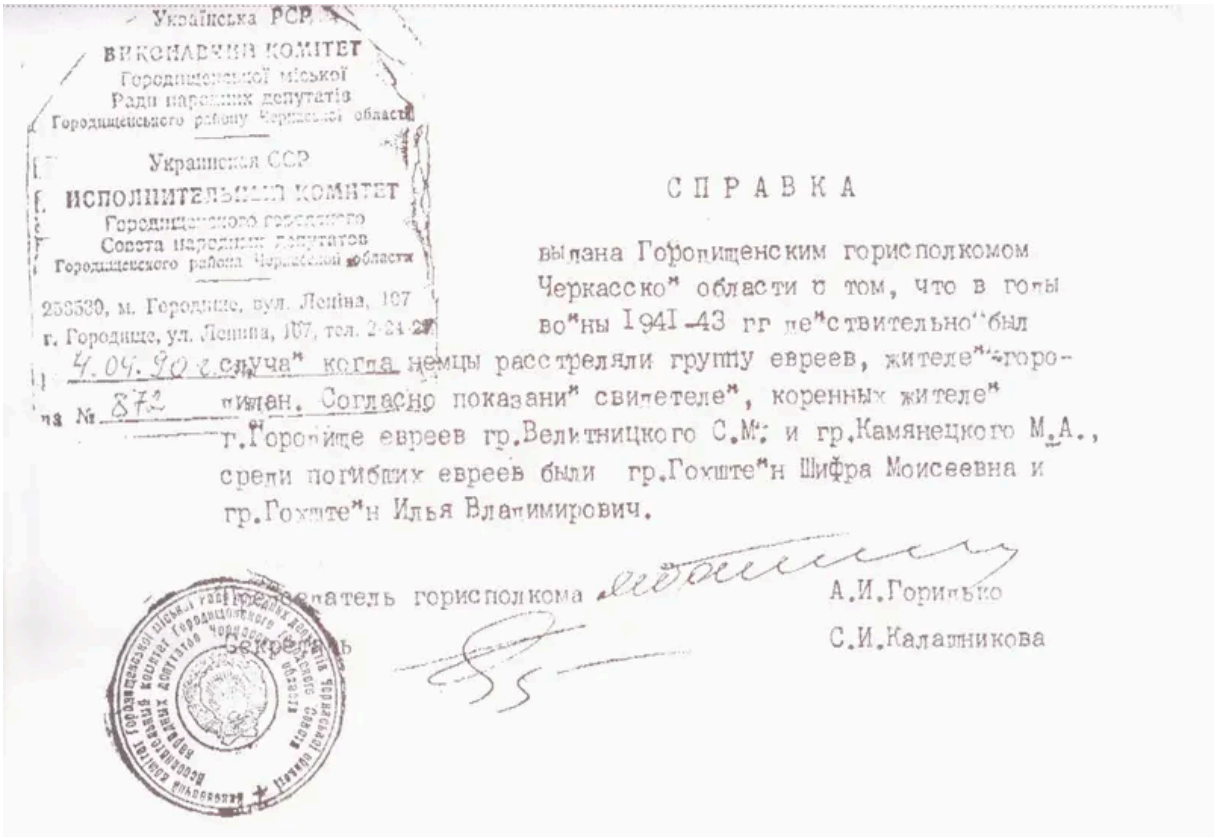
The sources in the document give March and April 1942; the testimonies are clearly attributed.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Number of victims near Mliiv

Date / topic	Information from the first document
The act of 7 March 1944	On 29 March 1942 more than 300 Jews were rounded up; the examination of the mass grave found at least 300 killed
Nina Laskava's testimony	The eyewitness recalled a column of more than 300 Jews brought to the place of the shooting
Mykhailo Kamenetsky's recollections	The author recalled about 400 people shot; this is his testimony published in 1995
Establishing names	Most of the names of those killed remain unknown

The figures follow specific documents and testimonies; they are not a single established total.



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СПРАВКА

выдана Городищенским горисполкомом Черкасской области о том, что в годы войны 1941-43 гг. действительно был случай, когда немцы расстреляли группу евреев, жителей города. Согласно показаний свидетелей, коренных жителей г. Городище евреев гр. Вельтницкого С.М. и гр. Камянецкого М.А., среди погибших евреев были гр. Гохштейн Шифра Моисеевна и гр. Гохштейн Илья Владимирович.

Председатель горисполкома А.И. Горилько

Секретарь С.И. Калашникова

Certificate of the executive committee of the Horodyshche Town Council of People's Deputies, Cherkasy Oblast, dated 4 September 1990, on the Nazi shooting of Jewish residents of Horodyshche in 1941–1943. Among the dead the document names Shyfra Moiseivna Hokhshtein and Illia Volodymyrovych Hokhshtein.
Archival document, copy.

Names that it has been possible to establish

Hundreds of Jews of Horodyshche and the surrounding settlements, shot by the Nazis in 1942, are buried in the mass grave near Mliiv. Most of their names still remain unknown.

Thanks to archival documents, eyewitness memories and family testimonies, researchers have been able to recover some of the names of the dead. The information collected concerns both the mass shooting near Mliiv and other killings of Jews of the Horodyshche area during the occupation.

- **Shyfra Musiivna Hokhshtein and Illia Volodymyrovych Hokhshtein.** Their names are given in a 1990 certificate of the Horodyshche town executive committee on the basis of the testimony of local inhabitants S. M. Veletnytsky and M. A. Kamenetsky. The research list provided gives the date of the certificate as 4 April 1990. The spelling of the names and the date of the document need to be checked against the archival copy.
- **Hryhorii Melnyk**, born about 1926, a student of the Horodyshche agricultural technical college. His death during the shooting near Mliiv was recalled by Yurii Fedosiiovych Suk, who heard of his friend's death from a teacher.
- **Palti (Paltiel?) Itskovych Begelfer and members of his family.** According to the memories of Yukhym Lazarevych Begelfer, his father's elder brother Palti remained

in occupied Horodyshche with his family and was killed during the mass shooting near Mliiv. The names of the other members of the family still need to be established.

- **Betia Begelfer and her son and daughter.** Betia was the first wife of Leizer Itskovych Begelfer. According to family testimony, she and her two children were killed near Mliiv in 1942. The names of the children remain unestablished.
- **Roza and Burakh Vynokur and their son Abrasha (Abram).** Inhabitants of Horodyshche who remained in the town during the occupation. According to the family testimony of Yukhym Syhalov, they were shot near Mliiv on 29 March 1942. Their names are commemorated in the Hall of Names of the Yad Vashem memorial complex in Jerusalem.
- **The wife of the teacher Mylodanov and his daughter Sonia.** According to the memories of Halyna Artemenko, the wife and daughter of the teacher Mylodanov were Jewish, and Sonia hid for some time with her family. Nina Laskava recalled that a woman with a child named Mylodanova tried to hide under a small bridge but were killed. The circumstances of the death of this family and the identities of the people mentioned require further clarification.
- **The Kamenetsky family, approximately four people.** According to the memories of Mykhailo Abramovych Kamenetsky, members of his family were shot in February 1942. This dating differs from the date of the mass shooting near Mliiv given in the 1944 act. The names and the exact circumstances of the deaths of these people still need to be established.
- **Manuil Shtrofer**, born in 1920, an inhabitant of the village of Mliiv. According to the Book of Sorrow of Ukraine, he was killed in September 1942 and buried in the mass grave at the village cemetery. His name therefore belongs to the history of the victims of the Nazi occupation in the Horodyshche area, but the available information does not allow him to be counted among those killed in the March shooting near the Sadstantsiia tract.

Note. This list is not a complete list of the dead and brings together information of varying degrees of documentary confirmation. The names are kept as given in the archival and research materials provided. For some people the date and place of death or burial require further verification. Sources: the research “List of Jews of the Town of Horodyshche and the Horodyshche District Shot on 29 March 1942 on the Outskirts of the Village of Mliiv”, compiled by Klavdiia Kolesnikova; materials of Mykola Shcherbyna; testimonies of Mykhailo Kamenetsky, Halyna Artemenko, Nina Laskava, Yurii Suk, Yukhym Begelfer and Yukhym Syhalov; Book of Sorrow of Ukraine, vol. 1, p. 70.

Testimony about Mykola Zhuk and a rescued inhabitant of Horodyshche

According to information in a Ukraine Jewish Heritage publication, during the Nazi occupation Mykola Zhuk, a native of the village of Dyrdyn, was deputy head of the local auxiliary police. After the war he ended up in the USA. In the early 1980s the Soviet side sought his extradition on charges of involvement in the extermination of the Jews of Horodyshche.

While these circumstances were being examined, American representatives interviewed Herhel, one of those who survived the shooting near Mliiv.

According to the published account, Herhel did not confirm that Zhuk had personally taken part in the shootings. He recalled that while fleeing he ran out of the bushes straight towards Zhuk. Zhuk could have killed him or handed him over, but turned away and let him escape.

According to Ukraine Jewish Heritage, the USA refused to extradite Mykola Zhuk. This testimony is important for research into the circumstances of the tragedy and the role of Ukrainian participants.

The Vynokur family: memory preserved in Israel

The story of another Jewish family of Horodyshche has been recovered thanks to the memories of Yukhym Yosypovych Syhalov, who lived in Israel.

His mother, Frida Burakhivna Vynokur (1921–1996), was born in Horodyshche. Before the war she married Yosyp Syhalov and moved to Kharkiv. In the summer of 1941 the couple and Frida's younger sister, Ida Vynokur, were evacuated to Siberia, where they survived the war.

Frida's parents, Roza and Burakh Vynokur, and her younger brother Abrasha remained in Horodyshche. According to family testimony, all three were killed during the mass shooting of Jews near Mliiv in March 1942.

Yukhym Syhalov first learned the details of this tragedy when he visited Horodyshche with his parents. He later preserved the family's story for his children and grandchildren.

Yukhym Syhalov commemorated the names of Roza, Burakh and Abrasha Vynokur in the Hall of Names of the Yad Vashem memorial complex in Jerusalem.

People who rescued the persecuted

The history of the Holocaust in the Horodyshche area also preserves testimonies about people who, at the risk of their own lives, rescued Jews from Nazi persecution.

According to Yad Vashem materials, in September 1942 Mykhailo and Hrunia Kulychenko sheltered Biana Maksymenko and her little daughter Tetiana, who had escaped from the Medzhybizh ghetto. Later the mother and child hid with Mariia Ruzhyna in Khlystunivka, and later still with Melaniia Kozachenko. Thanks to the help of these people they were able to stay in hiding until the liberation of the territory in February 1944.

On 31 May 1999 the Israeli memorial centre Yad Vashem recognised Mykhailo and Hrunia Kulychenko, Mariia Ruzhyna and Melaniia Kozachenko as Righteous Among the Nations for rescuing Jews during the Holocaust.

This story is a testimony to human solidarity and mutual help in the Horodyshche area during the years of the Nazi occupation.

The Jewish community of Horodyshche after the Second World War

After the end of the war only some of the Jewish families returned to Horodyshche.

A Ukraine Jewish Heritage publication mentions the Kamenetsky, Roitman and Veletnytsky families and other inhabitants, and also that in 1994 the Jewish community was re-established in Horodyshche, with Mykhailo Kamenetsky as its first head.

In the post-war decades the Jews of the town kept alive the memory of the dead, looked after the burial places and maintained family ties.

In the following decades, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, some of the Jewish inhabitants emigrated to Israel, Germany, the USA and other countries.

In 2016 the number of Jewish inhabitants of the town was approximately 10 people.

Memory of those killed near Mliiv

The first reinforced-concrete obelisk on the mass grave near Mliiv was erected in 1945. In the post-war decades the memory of the dead was kept alive by the Jewish inhabitants of Horodyshche and the relatives of those who were shot.

According to the testimony of Yukhym Begelfer, in the 1960s the elder of the Jewish community, Solomon Veletnitsky, organised the collection of funds to install a fence around the mass grave.

> “And in the 1960s the elected elder of the community, Solomon Veletnitsky, collected money and put up a small fence. On his initiative, too, members of the community brought from the Jewish cemetery near the bus station the top of a granite monument. It was fixed onto the already existing pedestal. It was the upper part of the gravestone of a former elder of the Jewish community from before the revolution.”

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Care of the mass grave

Date / topic	Information from the first document
1945	The first reinforced-concrete obelisk was placed on the mass grave
1960s	According to Yukhym Begelfer, the community elder Solomon Veletnitsky organised the collection of money for a fence
1960s	According to the same testimony, members of the community brought the upper part of a granite gravestone from the Jewish cemetery and joined it to the pedestal
Post-war visits	According to Nina Laskava, relatives of the dead came to the grave every year on 9 May

The history of the grave's care is reconstructed from the recollections of eyewitnesses and relatives.

Nina Laskava recalled that the relatives of the dead came to the mass grave every year on 9 May. Over time such visits became fewer.

These testimonies preserve the history not only of the memorial itself but also of the people who for decades cared for the memory of the dead.

The memorial plaque states that inhabitants of Horodyshche and other districts, shot by the Nazis in 1942, are buried here.

Although the inscription itself does not name the nationality of the victims, archival documents and historical research attest to the connection of this burial with the mass murder of the Jewish population.



The plaque close up. The inscription does not name the victims' nationality.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

Memory today

The memorial site has survived near the road, among trees. Its area is enclosed by a metal fence with concrete posts.

In the centre stands a dark obelisk with a memorial plaque.

On the base of the monument small stones left by visitors can be seen. Placing stones on graves is a traditional way of honouring the dead in Jewish culture.



Stones on the pedestal. By Jewish custom, a visitor leaves a stone on a grave.
Photo: Svitlana Liakhovets, 2026.

The contemporary photographs of this site were taken by Svitlana Liakhovets as part of the project “Jewish Memory of Horodyshche”.

They document not only the memorial but also the present condition of the site, which remains an important testimony to the tragic history of the town.

Jews in the family memory of Ukrainians

Svitlana Dremliuk: "The same bread fed us... Echoes of the shtetl in my life"

In her memoir Svitlana Dremliuk, a native of Vilshana in the Horodyshche district, tells of the life of the town's Jewish community, the friendship between families, the tragic events of the Nazi occupation and the people she remembered from childhood.

> "My mother kept especially vivid memories of the 1920s and 1930s and often recalled how she and grandfather Yevlampii went 'to the shtetl', how the Jewish traders greeted him warmly and always treated her to something. It was probably from those times that my mother had friends from Jewish families. While at school, she visited them and helped them with their studies, which she told me about in the post-war years."

The author tells of the events of the Second World War as her mother related them:

> "When the war began and the fascists occupied Vilshana, horrors began for the population, especially for the Jews. My mother remembered how the fascists drove the Jews in a crowd, and then, mocking them, pushed several dozen old people, children and women into the pond in the centre of Vilshana and began to shoot. The Jews screamed and wept with fear. They were not killed in the water, but some fell dead from shock. The rest were driven on: the mass killings were still to come..."
>
> [...]
>
> "On the whole, until the early 1960s there were still quite a few Jewish families in Vilshana, but they gradually left the village. My first teacher was Sofiia Kharytonivna Nirenberg, who later taught German and English. She was a rather kind and simple person, ready to help. She was a strong and active woman and carried the whole family on her shoulders."
>
> [...]
>
> "It was then, probably, that I first touched a small part of the problems of the Jewish population. The community was already gone..."

Svitlana Dremliuk, veteran teacher, Korsun-Shevchenkivskyi. Abridged (newspaper «Nadezhda», No. 8, 2015). The memories of the events of the occupation in Vilshana are given by the author as told by her mother. Translated from Ukrainian.

Memory of the Holocaust: the testimony of Asia Zelekson

> Far from the regional centre of Kyiv and 20 kilometres from the nearest railway station, Horodyshche, lies the large, beautiful village of Vilshana. Of the many Jewish families that the Pale of Settlement had cast into these remote parts as early as the middle of the 19th century, about a hundred remained by the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. Among

them was our large Umansky family: father, Lev Iosifovich, a former teacher at the Jewish school, mother Bronia, two sisters, Nina and Asia, and two brothers, Iliusha and Aronchik.

And all the other Jews were driven into the ghetto. These were four little houses standing next to each other, into which everyone dragged from the homes where they had lived before everything they could, food, so as to hold out at least for a while, since contact with the local population was forbidden. About a hundred people huddled in these little houses under the constant control of the policemen.

So passed the long, hungry and cold days and nights of the winter of 1941–1942. Every day was thought to be the last, but how many more trials lay ahead.

In the spring of 1942 the turn came for our ghetto. We were herded onto the square near the school, where carts were already waiting for the small children and the infirm old people, and amid the heart-rending screams of mothers driven out of their minds, everyone was driven through the village. At first we thought we would be shot outside the village, but there were no Germans among those guarding us, only policemen, which meant they had to hand us over to the Germans. And we walked and walked, and only towards evening did we reach a small town, Zvenyhorodka. We were all herded into the prison. Exhausted, hungry, no one even wept any more, there was no strength left; we prayed for one thing only: that the end would come soon.

We, however, were driven under escort to the village of Nemorozh, 8 kilometres from Zvenyhorodka. There, in a former collective-farm stable, the Germans had set up a concentration camp, where about two hundred people were already held under the reinforced guard of policemen.

There were two more actions to select the sick and the weakened, so that by May 1943 about 50 of us remained.

And, as usual, we were standing on the highway at a short distance from one another and kept working, when suddenly a terrible cry began to carry: “The Blacks.” And we already knew who the “Blacks” were and why they came. The “Blacks” were picked troops, SS men; they had a black uniform and a wide, shiny yellow belt with the inscription “Got mit uns” (“God with us”). So with the name of God they did their black deeds.

On one side of the road was forest, on the other, crops. Everyone scattered; some were seized at once, at the rest they began to shoot, but still some managed to run deeper into the forest, among them my sister and I; we tried to stay together all the time. And how many of us there were, such lucky ones, we learned only after the liberation, when we returned to our native village.

After the escape we did not come out of the forest for two days, and when the shooting stopped, we went to people and sought their protection. And they hid us, some in a cellar, some in an attic, and passed us on to their acquaintances or relatives in other villages. No one gave us away, no one betrayed us. It was already a completely different time; freedom was approaching. Our territory was liberated on 5 February 1944, when the well-known Korsun-Shevchenkivskyi encirclement was completed.

> About what all the former prisoners had to live through one could write not just a short sketch but a big book. And, leafing through it, recall again and again what happened to us every day, how we existed and how we survived in inhuman conditions, although it is hard to remember. I have told about myself very briefly, but I consider it my duty to write a few lines about those who were under occupation together with me and my sister, who managed to escape from this hell. How can I not remember all those whom I love and never forget.
>
> And how can I not say a few words about the Nirenberg family, their mother Dora and daughters Sara and Busia. Despite their hopeless poverty, they were all very kind people. Busia is no longer with us, which is a great pity. And Sara deserves to be told about separately. She stood out for her abilities already in the junior classes, and all of this proved useful to her in later life. In the camp she was distinguished by her courage, she was very daring, often took risks, slipped away to the village to beg a piece of bread, and it was only thanks to her that her mother and sister survived. Almost all the songs we used to sing in the camp then (that happened too, for youth has its way) were composed by Sara. And after escaping from the German concentration camp she also had to experience the “delights” of the Soviet GULAG, since at that time it was believed that if a Jew had survived the German occupation, he was a traitor to the motherland. In freedom Sara’s extraordinary abilities unfolded with new force. In a short time she graduated from a pedagogical institute (by correspondence), while working as a teacher of Russian language and literature at a secondary school, but this seemed too little to her, and she also enrolled in the English language faculty. Although her family life did not turn out well, she managed to bring up four children, gave them all an education and set them on their feet. And what did it cost her?! She sewed, and knitted, and worked the vegetable garden, and kept livestock, and, it must be said, by her own example she taught the children to work.

Asia Zelekson (Umanska). “Memory of the Heart”. Excerpts from the memoir. Abridged. Translated from Russian.

The memory that remains

The history of a town is made up not only of events that are customarily considered significant. It lives in ordinary human fates: in work, in study, in family life, in neighbourly relations, in a shared urban space.

The Jewish inhabitants of Horodyshche were part of this history for many generations.

They were born here, started families, worked, taught their children, built religious and communal institutions, and helped one another.

Their life left its mark on the development of the town.

The tragic events of the 20th century destroyed a large part of the community. Changes to the town's buildings erased much of the material evidence of its presence.

Today some of these places can be recognised only thanks to archival photographs. Others have survived but have almost lost their connection with their original history.

The return of memory does not mean the restoration of the past in the form in which it existed.

It means acknowledging that people whose names we often no longer know were part of the town, its culture and its everyday life.

The Jewish memory of Horodyshche is part of the memory of Horodyshche itself.

And preserving this history is needed not only to honour the dead but also to understand the many-layered past of a Ukrainian town.

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