

Map Corner

Moving Pictures: The Sokal 1854 Cadastral Map

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OLD MAPS APPEAR static and flat but often reveal dramatic changes to places when viewed through the lens of history. Several maps covering a span of years can work like frames in a motion picture, each capturing a moment in the evolution of a city or region, and together animating the landscapes where our families lived.

The city of Sokal, once at the north edge of Galicia and now in the Lviv Oblast of Ukraine near the Polish border, is one such place whose development is recorded in old maps. A visit to the modern city with images of the old maps at hand completes the story, for at least some of the historical structures and terrain.

An excellent starting point for a study of the city is the [1854 cadastral map of Sokal](#) created by the Austrian Empire from their meticulous survey of the same year. This high-scale and very detailed map, part of the collection of over 100 historical cadastral maps in the [Gesher Galicia Map Room](#), shows the streets and roads of the city on the east bank of the Bug River, including the footprint and materials of every building. The map also marks and identifies land use in and around the city, such as parks, agricultural fields, orchards and forests, and cemeteries. An excerpt from this map is shown on the next page.

In 1854, the city was already developing heavily to the south of its market square, which took the common rectangular form with a nearby church

and large synagogue (*see the image on this page*). Constrained by the river, residential and business areas grew along parallel roads to the south and perpendicular roads to the east. But for the moment, the heart of Sokal was in the market center; even the survey update recorded some decades later in red lines on this original map preserves the overall city layout.



The original city market square as it appeared in 1854. The Old (or Great) Synagogue is easily identifiable at lower right.

By the early twentieth century, the city core had already moved south, away from the “old” market to a “new” market in the triangular space south of the original core. A [1918 Austrian military map of Sokal](#) on the website of the [Center for Urban History of East Central Europe](#) shows this development, and labels the old market area as the “Jewish Quarter.” Another map on the Center’s site documents Sokal in 1925, with a few additional developments.

Next page: *An excerpt from the 1854 cadastral map of Sokal; images for this map were provided to Gesher Galicia by the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv (TsDIAL).*

Sokal

St. Michael

St. Nicolaus



Further change and drama came to Sokal through the catastrophe of World War II and during the subsequent Soviet era. As is evident in modern web maps and satellite images, the focal point of today's Sokal has shifted further south to include another triangular plaza facing the city cathedral, and residential areas have significantly expanded in three directions around the early urban core.

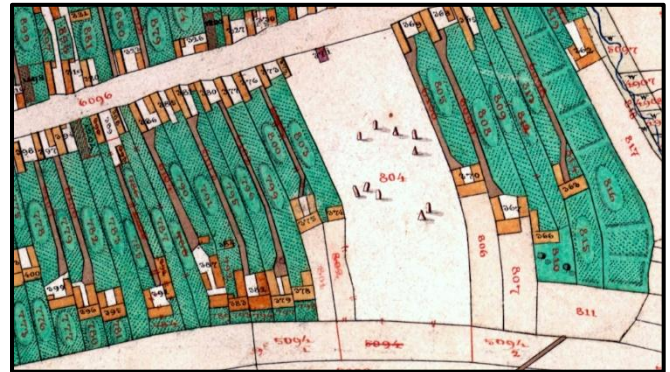


Ruin of the Old Synagogue of Sokal in February 2017

Some other changes were more tragic. On a visit to Sokal with friends earlier this year, we saw that the old market square is now a nearly wild parkland, with only the foundations visible of the historic buildings which once surrounded the square. Nearby, the Old Synagogue (illustrated and described by Dr. Sergey Kravtsov on page 29 in this issue) is a now decaying ruin. There have been heritage discussions in the region about how best to preserve the structure, but it remains open and unprotected at present.

Historic cemeteries in the city have not fared well in the post-war era, either. The 1854 cadastral map shows a Christian and a large Jewish cemetery already well developed east of the urban area; by 1918 the Christian cemetery had expanded twice. Today the original Christian

cemetery stands with only a sparse collection of monuments adjacent to the later expansion area.



The Jewish cemetery on the 1854 cadastral map

The original Jewish cemetery has been even further erased; today there are houses and gardens on the land, with no evidence of the graves and their former headstones. A small number of loose *matzevot* found around the city have been assembled at the edge of the Christian cemeteries, awaiting future preservation work.



A few dozen surviving matzevot from the Sokal Jewish cemetery, as seen in February 2017

Speaking of moving pictures, as noted in the May 2009 issue of the *Galitzianer*, Sokal was the setting for the documentary film *No. 4 Street of Our Lady*, introduced by Geshar Galicia at the film festival of the 2009 IAJGS conference in Philadelphia.