Map Corner

1850 Cadastral Map of Gorlice

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THERE ARE MANY avenues we can follow to explore the history of places where our ancestors lived. These different approaches enable us to create and enrich context for our family stories and for the scraps of records and data we collect in our research. In his article beginning on page 20 of this journal, Peter Bein describes his journey of discovery to the former Galician city of Gorlice, today in southeast Poland, where his grandmother was born and where she returned during World War II after being deported from Leipzig, Germany. With the help of a historical cadastral map and other resources, I will add further details about some of the places and events in Mr. Bein's article.

For much of its history, Gorlice was a small city. Galician and Polish censuses from the mid-19th century until the 1920s show a steady population count between four and five thousand. Although the number of houses declined significantly as a result of severe damage during World War I, most of the people stayed and rebuilt. Gorlice has since swelled to six times its earlier population, but the center still retains most of its historical structure and layout.

On the next page is an excerpt of a very detailed 1850 cadastral map that was recently posted to the Gesher Galicia Map Room. By comparing satellite images of the modern city with this map, it is possible to contrast city features across 170 years. Locating the *rynek* (market square) becomes a starting point for virtual exploration of both the contemporary and historical landscapes.

Walking the Neighborhoods on Foot or Online

During his visit to the modern city, Mr. Bein found two buildings that matched return addresses on letters from his grandmother. Using web-mapping services (OpenStreetMap, Google, HERE, etc.), these locations can also be found and transferred to the 1850 map to further investigate the neighborhood in history. On the map excerpt shown on page 27, I have circled Mr. Bein's two building locations, which are west of the rynek and quite close to each other, just a few minutes' walk apart.

This excerpt of the historical map reveals other important features of the neighborhood as well. The large building numbered 263 and colored in dark red (signifying a masonry building of significance) is the Great Synagogue, one of several built on this site over two centuries. Today the building still stands, re-purposed as a bakery after the war and the destruction of Gorlice's Jewish community. Further research, using information from Virtual Shtetl and JewishGen KehilaLinks, shows that a smaller Hasidic synagogue was built nearby. The synagogue survived until very recently, now marked by a memorial plaque at the site. The two synagogue sites are identified with squares on the map excerpt on page 27. During the later 19th and early 20th centuries, about half of Gorlice's population was comprised of Jews. It's easy to see that this area was a significant Jewish neighborhood. Not surprisingly, as Mr. Bein relates, it also formed part of the ghetto, where Jews were imprisoned during the Nazi occupation of the city.
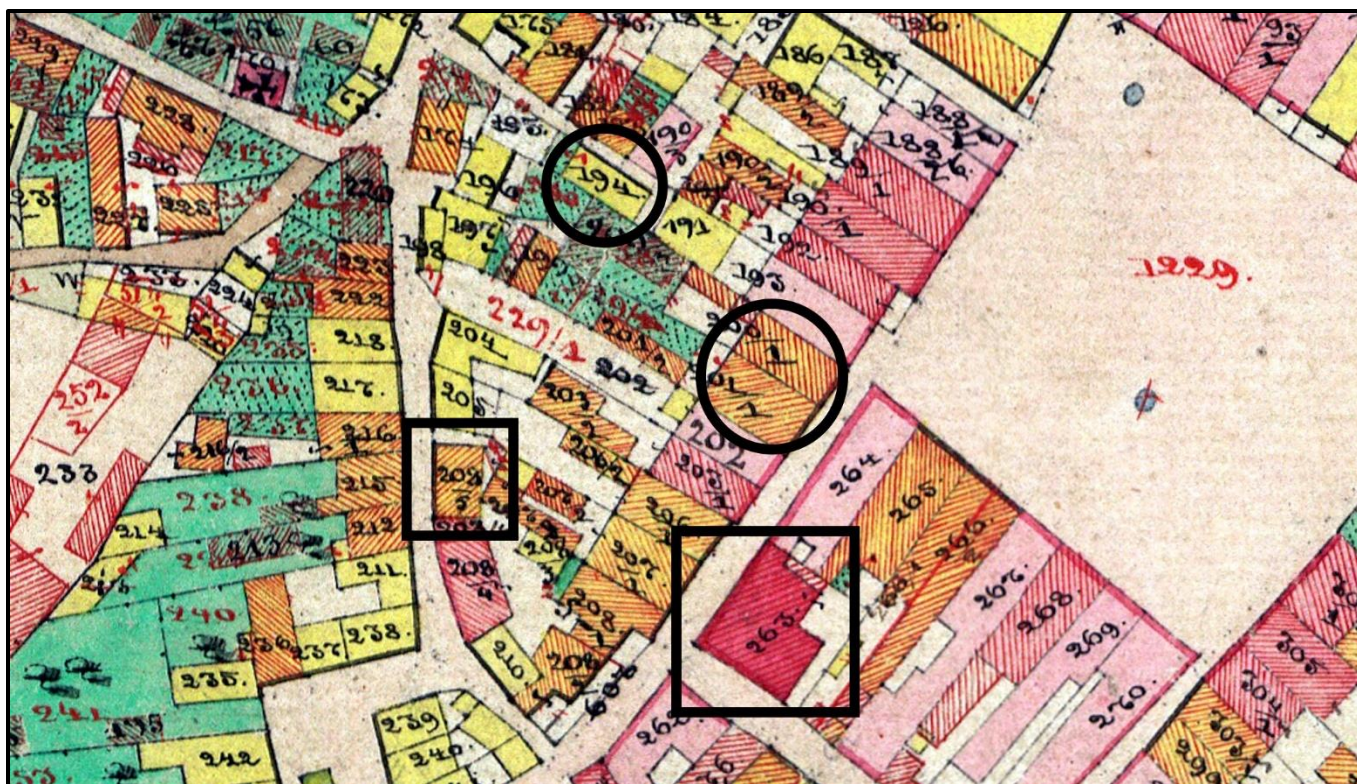
Next page: An excerpt from the 1850 cadastral map of Gorlice, as presented on the Gesher Galicia Map Room. The original paper sheets from which this digital map was assembled are preserved by the Polish State Archive in Przemyśl.
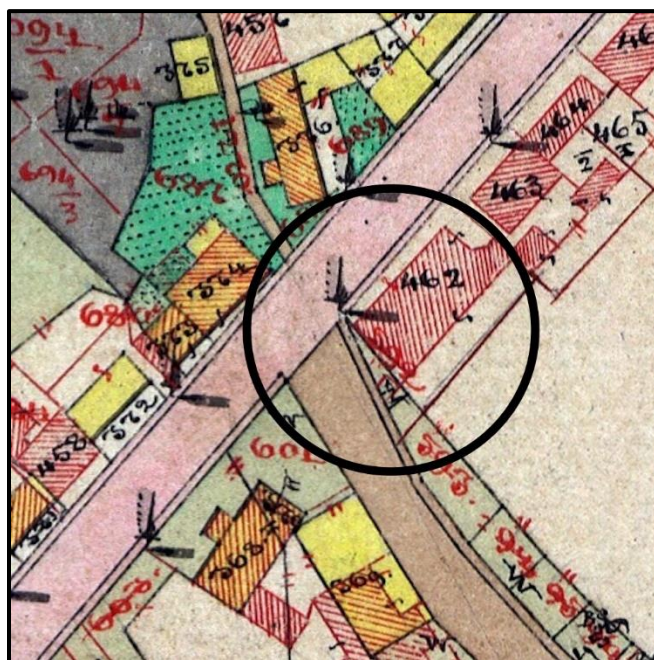
Maria Geburt.

Gorlice.

Mühlbach

The building locations visited by Peter Bein are circled on this excerpt from the historical map. Nearby synagogue locations are boxed, in what was once a significant Jewish neighborhood.

Markers of the Early Oil Industry

The 1850 map was surveyed a bit too early to indicate the oil fields in Gorlice. However, it is possible to locate the street intersection where the world's first kerosene streetlamp was installed, as mentioned by Mr. Bein. It's across the Ropa River from the rynek, shown in detail in the adjacent map excerpt. Today, next to the building numbered 462 on the historical map and drawn in red hash lines (indicating it was built after the original survey of 1850), the city has erected a monument and a replica of the first lamp. On the face of the building, a mural depicts the lighting of the lamp, which took place a few years after the 1850 map was made, as well as scenes from the region's oil fields.

The river's name also relates to petroleum, which was collected from seep points on the ground in the region before the development of drilled wells. *Ropa* is the Polish word for *oil*.

The world's first kerosene streetlamp was installed here a few years after the map was made.
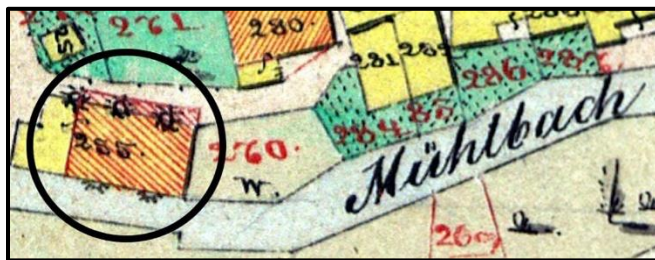
Elsewhere around the City

Just east of the rynek, both on the large 1850 map on page 26 and in the modern city, there is a large Roman Catholic church. The building shown on the map was destroyed in the 1874 city fire but was rebuilt; a church there has served the community since the 14th century. To the west of the rynek, and beyond the residential core of the city in 1850, a large Christian cemetery is visible, which is significantly more expansive today.

No Jewish cemetery appears on the 1850 map because the Jewish cemetery was established just outside the Gorlice cadastral (property tax) area, to the northwest, in the direction of the adjacent village of Stróżówka. Like in many towns and villages in former Galicia, this cemetery was heavily damaged during World War II. The Jewish headstones were stolen and used in roadwork and building foundations. After the war, a Jewish descendants group worked to recover several hundred of the stones and return them to the cemetery, where several memorials were erected.

Also not featured on the 1850 map are the many cemeteries for soldiers killed during World War I that dot the landscape in and around Gorlice, whose entire population was affected by the war. Military cemetery No. 91 includes the graves of Jewish soldiers who fought and died nearby during the intense Gorlice-Tarnów Offensive, which lasted from spring to autumn of 1915, a Central powers success that pushed the opposing Russian Empire out of Galicia—for a while.

There are many more features on the 1850 map to explore. For example, circled on the map excerpt on this page, there's a large mill numbered 255, just outside the residential area on a branch of the river. This mill may have been operated by Jews, as many mills in Galicia were.

Historical maps like the 1850 map of Gorlice add another layer of context to online and traditional

A mill on the millstream in an excerpt of the 1850 map

resources. Hopefully, these brief examples will inspire others to explore the Gesher Galicia Map Room as a component of their research.

FACES of GALICIA

Isak Moses Knisbacher (1887–1918) and his sister Sura (circa 1893–1941), standing behind their mother, Cirl Banner (?–1941), and their father, Dov Berl (1862–1925). Photo circa 1910 in Stanisławów; submitted by Isak's grandson Jeffrey Knisbacher (Gesher Galicia member).