

Map Corner

Changes to the 1850 Map of Mielec

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THE ARTICLE BY Scott Genzer about the Jewish cemeteries of Mielec, beginning on page 4 of this issue of the journal, provides us with the opportunity to delve into an important historical mapping topic. This topic involves updates to an original land survey, in this case, the 1850 land survey for the city of Mielec. The updates appear as revisions in red to the city's original map, clearly showing how Mielec evolved since its 1850 land survey. As usual with Map Corner articles, it is preferable to read this one in its digital format so that the red revisions are visible, as opposed to in the black-and-white print copy of the journal.

The topic of revisions is more significant than it may appear at first glance. Of the nearly 200 cadastral maps posted to the [Gesher Galicia Map Room](#) as of this writing, fully half show revisions from later land surveys. These revisions reflect a variety of property changes. Some of the changes are the result of natural causes, such as the slow drift of riverbanks. More commonly, though, these property changes are caused by the human-driven development of settlements for economic, community, and other reasons.

The revised maps are identified on the [cadastral maps page](#) of our Map Room with a red crosshatch icon (⊞). The 1850 [cadastral map of Mielec](#) is a useful case study, as it records extensive updates measured during an 1887 land survey. Since the updates are shown on the 1850 map, it is easy to

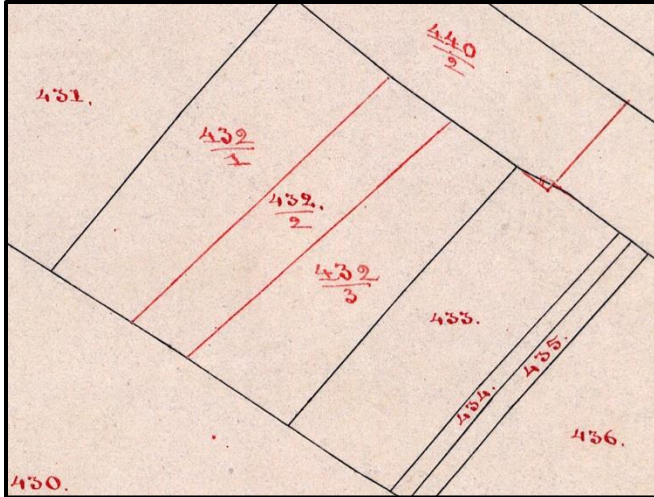
compare the original features of Mielec with those that defined the city 37 years later. The 1887 revisions reveal significant, deliberate development, as well as changes that may represent recovery from fires or other issues. The revisions also document some of the Jewish cemetery changes described in Genzer's historical review and provide context to decisions the Jewish community made long after the Galician era had ended.

Red Lines, Marks, and Numbers

From the perspective of the Habsburg administrators, measuring and recording property changes to both buildings and land boundaries were important to keeping tax assessments current and equitable. Often the revisions subtly document political developments as well, such as the shift from German-language annotations to their Polish equivalents. Accordingly, on the Mielec map, many German labels were crossed out and replaced with Polish words in 1887. For example, the map title was changed from *Stadt Mielec* to *Miasto Mielec*, the river went from *Wysłoka Fluss* to *Rzeka Wisłoka*, and the synagogue, from *Synagoge* to *Synagoga*.

Survey updates were almost always documented on the maps in red pencil or ink, with specific lines, marks, and numbers carrying consistent meanings. The most common revisions by far were splits of agricultural land parcels, which took place for many reasons, such as sales to other farmers, divisions between inheritors, crossings of new roads and railroads, and changes to land parcels that made plowing more efficient.

To indicate the division of a land parcel, red lines were simply drawn on the original map where the new parcel boundaries fell, and the original single parcel number was normally divided among the new smaller parcels using a slash. For example, as shown on the map excerpt on page 11, an original parcel numbered 432 was divided into new parcels numbered 432/1, 432/2, and 432/3. As is the



Parcel number 432 has been divided into three parts by 1887: 432/1, 432/2, and 432/3

case for land parcels on original Austrian cadastral maps, these revised numbers appear on the map in red. Similarly, adjacent parcels could be joined together into one. The marking for the removal of parcel boundaries is a red double hatch mark, like a quotation mark sign, on the boundary segment that was removed.

On the 1850 map of Mielec, the market square and most of the nearby streets, roads, and other open land were originally identified as a single parcel numbered 877 and owned by the civil community. By 1887, that space had been divided into an astounding 27 separate parcels, numbered from 877/1 to 877/27.

Changes to buildings were recorded similarly. Enlarging an existing building footprint was indicated by simply extending the earlier outline with new lines to show the updated version and filling in the space of the newly constructed building with red diagonal lines. In addition, two adjacent buildings could be joined on a revised map simply by placing a red double hatch mark on the original wall that was removed as a property boundary. Just as they are for building parcels on original Austrian cadastral maps, new building parcels are numbered in black on the revised map.

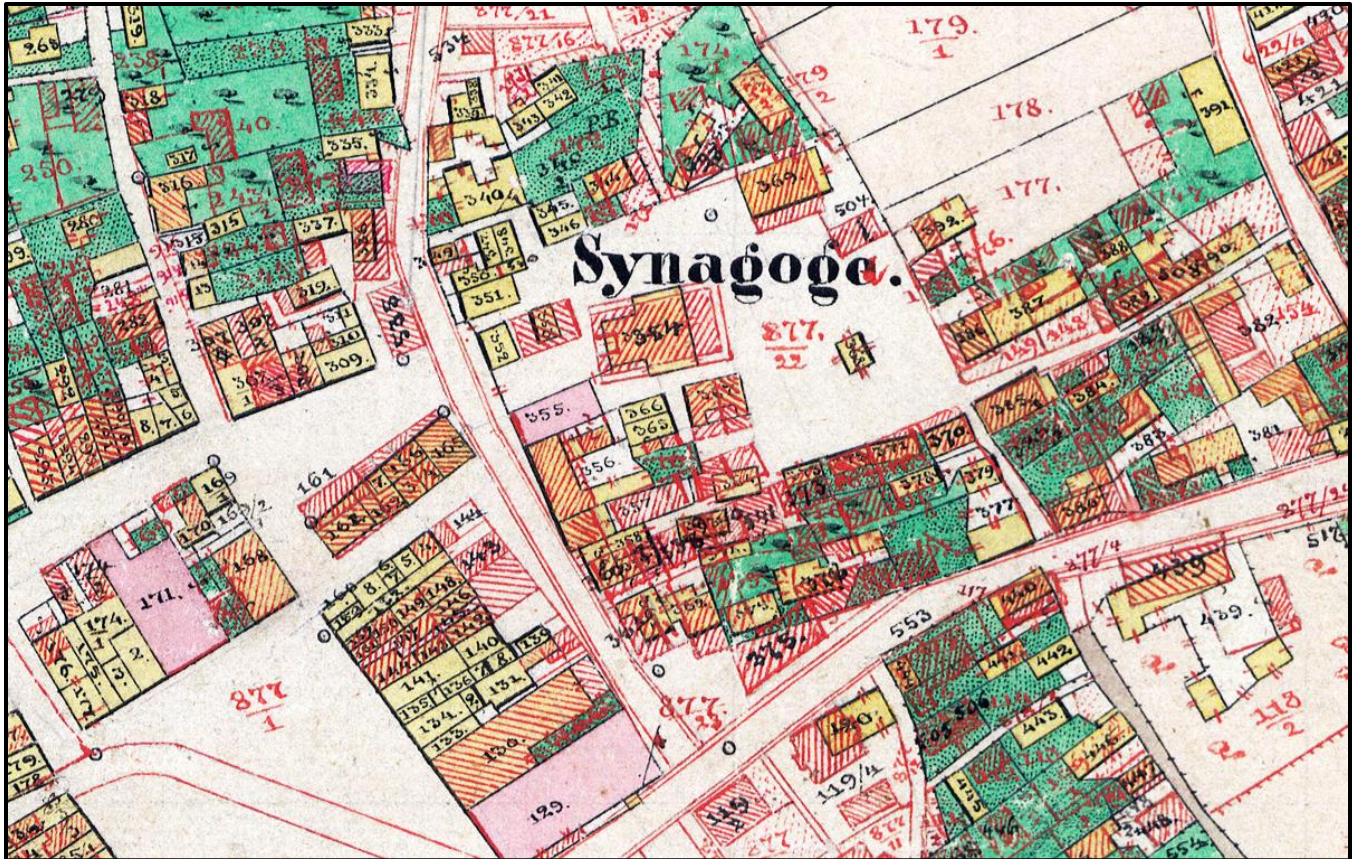
The removal of whole buildings between surveys was depicted by double hatch marks on all the outline walls that no longer existed. Sometimes an s-shaped single mark like a tilde (~) was added to a building or land parcel boundary to clarify that that boundary was not changed while others around it were.

Revisions around the Synagogue

Examples of some of the revision symbols described above appear on the following page on the map of Mielec, in a dense but coherent set of changes to the large main synagogue and the buildings and land surrounding it. Although the changes between 1850 and 1887 were extensive in this area, I can only speculate as to the reasons why. Fire could be one explanation, given that most of the buildings on the square, including the synagogue, were wooden in 1850, as indicated by their yellow color on the map. According to Virtual Shtetl, the website run by the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, there was, in fact, a large fire in Mielec in 1865. The development of the city center from 1850 to 1887 may also reflect population and economic growth.

In 1850, the then-wooden synagogue at building parcel 354 was larger than the surrounding houses and was built on a T-shaped footprint. By 1887, that building had been replaced by a much larger building on a rectangular footprint. We know from other sources that the new synagogue was built of brick. Aerial and postcard photographs from the 1930s show it as an imposing building with two crenellated towers on either side of the entrance on its front face.

Also by 1887, other buildings near the synagogue had been enlarged, and the irregular square around the synagogue was reconstructed on one side with tightly spaced buildings in a straight row. In fact,



Excerpt of the revised map of Mielec focusing on the synagogue (building parcel 354) and the square around it

three of the four sides of the market square of Mielec were heavily rebuilt between the two land surveys, suggesting, as stated above, that the city suffered at least one devastating fire after 1850.

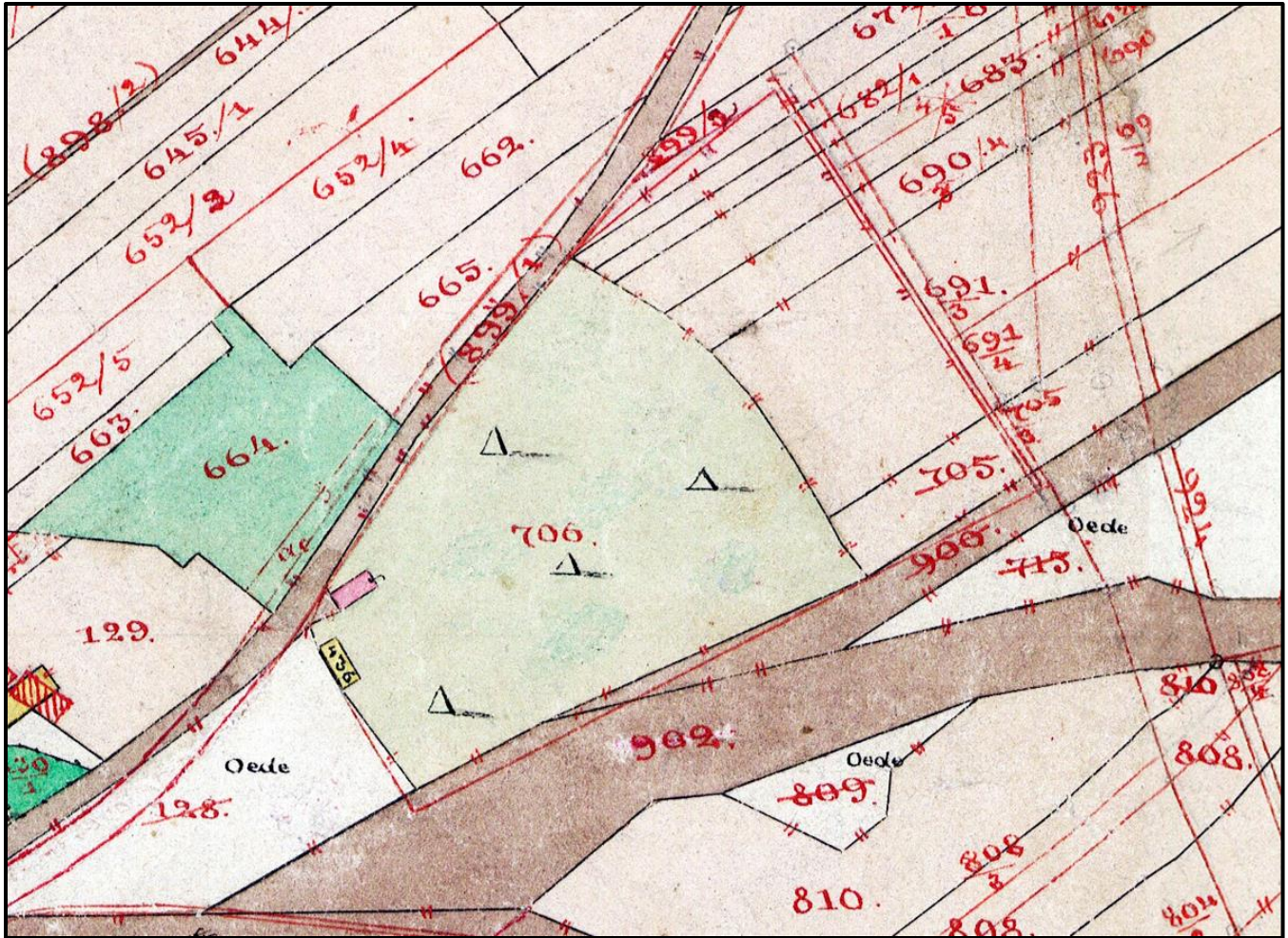
In contrast to the synagogue and its surrounding area, there is the church of St. Matthew, a masonry church just south of the main square, but not shown on the map excerpt above. The church was unmodified in the 1887 revision, except for the garden boundaries and the construction of an adjacent road, which forced the removal or modification of buildings that stood in the way of traffic.

Changes to the Jewish Cemeteries

The Old Jewish Cemetery of Mielec, which Genzer describes in his article, appears east of the city center on a large land parcel numbered 706 on the map, as indicated on the excerpt on page 13. The

parcel is colored light green, signifying grass, and has small triangle symbols, which represent *matzevot* and designate the space as a Jewish cemetery on Galician and other Habsburg cadastral maps. At one of the western corners of the parcel, two small buildings are shown, one at what appears to be the cemetery's original entrance. These buildings likely represent burial houses but may have had other functions as well.

The 1887 survey revisions on the cadastral map of Mielec reflect changes to the Old Jewish Cemetery that tell an interesting story. Seven agricultural land parcels east of the cemetery were merged with the original cemetery parcel, enabling an expansion of the cemetery area by more than half. A slight rerouting of roads to the north and south of the cemetery also allowed for a small net enlargement of the burial ground.



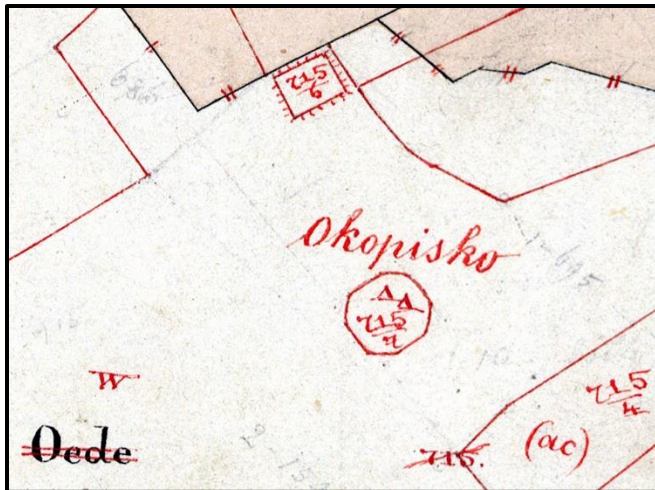
The Old Jewish Cemetery (land parcel 706) in 1850, with many revisions in 1887, expanding its area. The railroad passing to the right of the cemetery blocked further expansion.

However, the change that most significantly impacted the future of the cemetery was the introduction of the railroad in Mielec. The Mielec railroad station officially opened in 1887. Visible in the 1887 map revisions just to the east of the enlarged cemetery boundary is the wide right of way for the rail lines. The outline of the train station and its platforms and sidings, not shown in this map excerpt, is just to the north. Thus, the old cemetery had effectively become blocked in by two roads and the railroad, limiting future expansion at this site, and likely driving the Jewish community to seek other land for burials in the 20th century.

Polish historians Andrzej Krempa and Krzysztof Bielawski have described a cholera epidemic that

broke out in Mielec in 1873 and lasted for several months. More than 200 Jews died of cholera and typhus that year, and there were other victims as well. In his article, Genzer mentions that the Jewish victims were buried in a common grave. We can see the location of that grave in the 1887 revisions to the Mielec cadastral map on the next page.

As shown in the excerpt on that page, the burial site for the Jewish cholera victims is a very small, nearly circular Jewish cemetery that was partitioned from parcel 715 on barren land to the east of the Old Jewish Cemetery. It was far enough from the residential parts of the city to prevent the transmission of disease. The circle is marked with triangles, signifying a Jewish cemetery, and is



The small Jewish epidemic cemetery and possibly a Christian epidemic cemetery nearby

labeled as parcel number 715/7. We also see the word *okopisko* nearby, which is a common informal Polish term for non-Christian cemeteries.

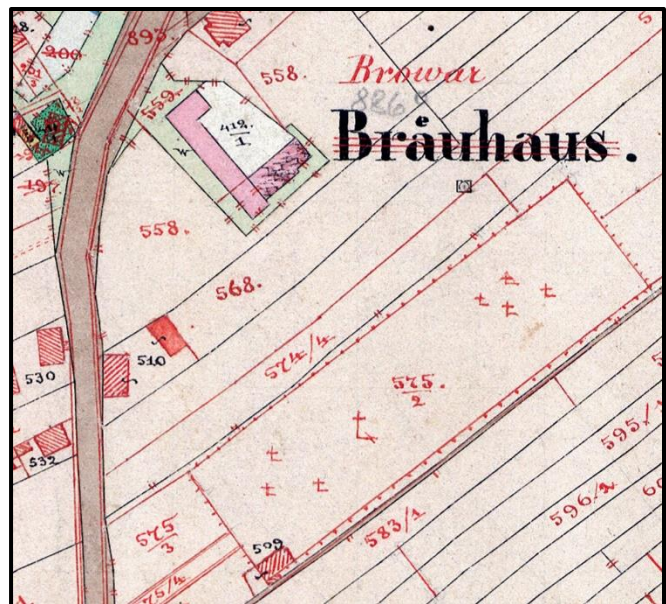
A short distance to the north is an even smaller, nearly square parcel numbered 715/6 in the revision and bordered with a fringe of hatch marks, representing fencing and suggesting another burial site. Perhaps it is a Christian epidemic cemetery created the same year as the Jewish one.

The New Jewish Cemetery of Mielec that is described by Genzer, as well as at least one smaller and more remote Jewish burial site, were established after the 1887 survey of Mielec and are not recorded on the cadastral map. Polish military maps from the 1930s show the New Jewish Cemetery as a walled rectangular area almost as large as the old cemetery. It was constructed surrounding the earlier epidemic cemetery, probably as a way of respecting and protecting that site. The Jewish cemeteries shown on these later maps are marked with T symbols, as distinguished from the crosses used to label Christian cemeteries.

More Changes in Mielec

The history and heritage of the Mielec Jewish community was significant in part because the Jewish

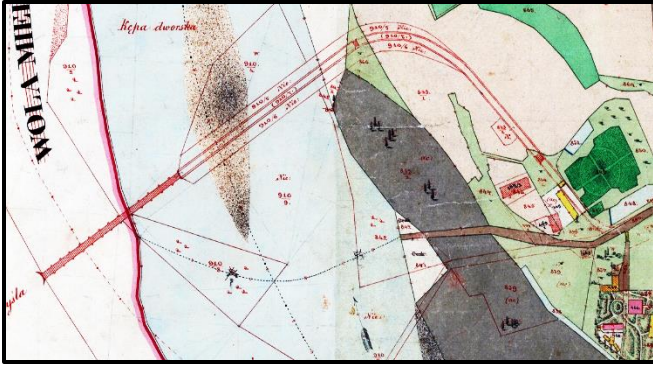
population was so large, numbering nearly 3,000, or more than half the city's residents, in the Austrian censuses of 1880 and 1900. However, the Christian and civil communities were also well represented in the 1850 and 1887 land surveys that resulted in the revised Mielec cadastral map. As indicated in the red revisions on the map excerpt below, a large, new fenced-in Christian cemetery was established northeast of the city center, carved out from what had been a huge agricultural parcel. A nearby brewery (the German *Bräuhaus* crossed out and replaced by the Polish *Browar*) also experienced some changes, gaining land but losing half of its building footprint.



Large Christian cemetery and changed brewery

The excerpt of the Mielec map shown on the following page reflects modifications caused by changes in the flow of the Wisłoka River. In the 19th century, the river was wide but shallow, and its banks were apparently always moving, alternately flooding and exposing land. The 1850 land survey recorded a ferry which crossed the river due west of the town center. However, by 1887, the river had deviated significantly to the west, and as indicated on the map excerpt, the main road in that direction had been rerouted to connect to a

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By 1887, a large new bridge over the Wistoka River had replaced the ferry line that was recorded as part of the original 1850 survey

large bridge, built partly on exposed sandy terrain a short distance downstream from the original ferry crossing. Today, a bridge still serves the city in that location, but the Wistoka River is now channeled and normally is much narrower than it had been in the past.

As seen on the cadastral map of Mielec, there were many changes in the landscape of the city between 1850 and 1887. Some changes were driven by natural forces, others by manmade forces. Either way, they were all recorded down to very small details. Such changes are also reflected on many other cadastral maps in the Map Room section of the Gesher Galicia website. In fact, it is remarkable to consider just how much information was captured on these maps in a few lines and marks made with a red pencil or pen. As noted in an article in the reference section of the Map Room (maps.geshergalicia.org/ref/habmap/#scale), the Habsburg Monarchy, through its immense cadastral survey initiative in Galicia, recorded signs of a kingdom and empire in constant flux.

Editor's Note: Careful readers may notice that in other articles we use the word "town." Our maps manager, Jay Osborn, chooses his geographical terms very precisely. Here he refers to Mielec as a city because the German word "Stadt" on the 1850 map and the Polish word "miasto" in the 1887 revisions indicate official status and more closely translate to the English word "city."



Bar mitzvah photo of Yossel Fischer; Kopyczynce, Poland (today's Kopychintsy, Ukraine), July 1923; collection of Yeshiva University Museum in New York, gift of Mrs. Joseph Lempel