



## Jewish Life in the Town of Dąbrowica

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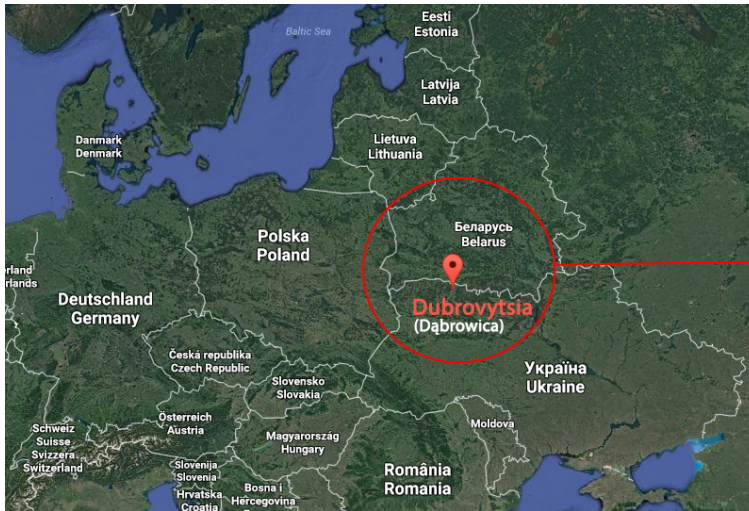
Teach and Learn About the Holocaust



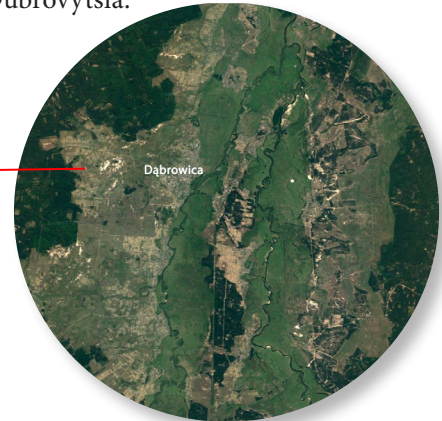
# Jewish Life in the Town of Dąbrowica

## Dąbrowica

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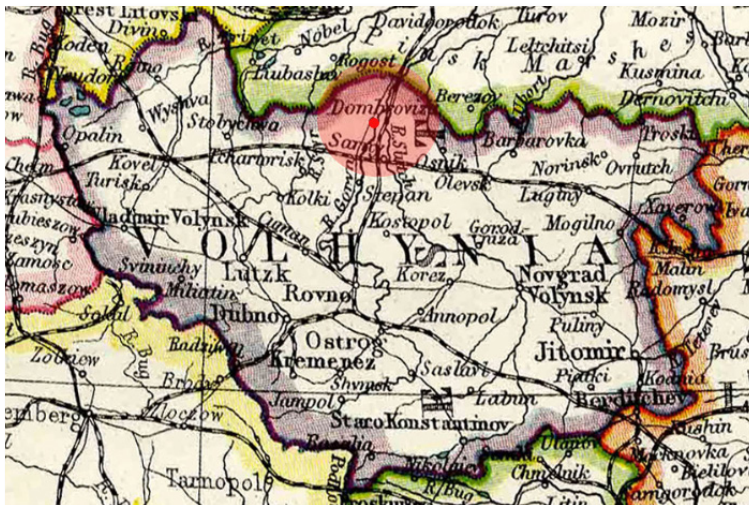


Dąbrowica where Oskar Tojzner grew up is situated in present-day Ukraine. In Ukrainian it is called Dubrovysia.



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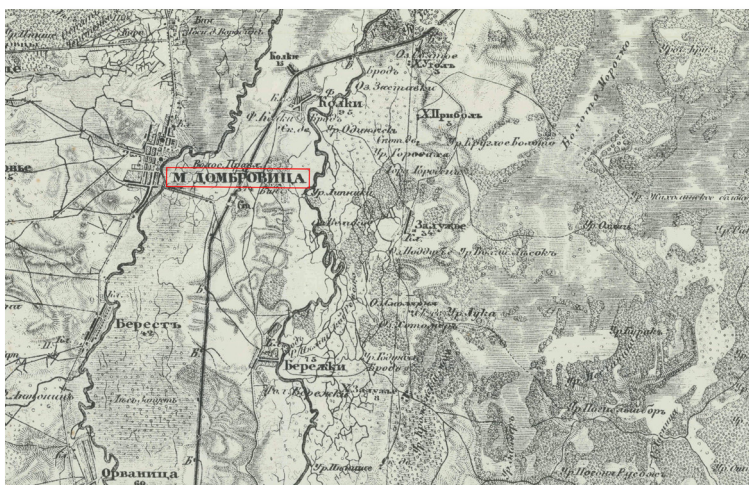
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The town is situated on the Horyn River. To the north are deep forests and marshes, and to the south a more open landscape of soft hills.

Volhynia 1908.

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Dąbrowica used to belong to Poland and before that to the Russian Empire. As part of the Volhynia region, the town belonged to the Polish Eastern borderland – a region that is traditionally ethnically mixed.

Map from 1887.

### An Old City

Dąbrowica is an old town. It is already mentioned in documents from 1005 as capital of the duchy. During the 17th century Russians and Poles fought for the area and in the end of the 18th century, during the process of Polish Partitions, Dąbrowica and the nearby town Sarny became part of the Russian empire.



The Russian Empire.

### Religion and Politics

Both towns were typical *shtetls* – towns with a large Jewish population, synagogues, and a predominantly Jewish culture. The Jews followed the religious calendar and the families raised their children according to Orthodox tradition and valued the spiritual life.

The Jewish population grew constantly, in Dąbrowica from 2,868 in 1897 to 3,225 in 1937 – from 47 to almost 55 % of the total population.



A Jewish family returns from the fair. Sarny, 1915.



## Jewish Life in the Town of Dąbrowica

The Jews in the area were usually not assimilated and had very little contact with the non-Jewish Polish and Ukrainian population. The vast majority of the Jews had Yiddish or Hebrew as their first language.



The Yiddish school in Dąbrowica in the 1930s.

In the 20th century Jewish life in the region gradually changed. After World War I, when Dąbrowica was incorporated in the Second Polish Republic, the Jewish community split in three main groups: the religious Orthodox; the growing Zionist movement, which supported the idea of a Jewish state in the British mandate Palestine; and the socialist Bund, the largest non-religious Jewish party.



Membership card of the secular Jewish youth movement Hashomer Hazair.

Throughout the 1930s, religious ties became noticeably weaker. Still, many obeyed Jewish traditions, kept kosher kitchen and Shabbat. The important role of the family was one reason for this; many young secular Jews would still go to the synagogue, at least on holidays, out of respect towards parents and family elders.



A rabbi in Dąbrowica and his family.

## Antisemitism

During the economic crises of the 1930s and the so-called Great Depression, the Polish government started favoring the non-Jewish Polish population, supporting anti-Jewish boycotts that harmed Jewish economy.

Many of the Jews in the Dąbrowica district, most of whom were peddlers, traders, craftsmen and shopkeepers, became significantly poorer. The last two years before the war were especially tough. But the close family relations ensured that individuals with no income were supported.



A Jewish family in Dąbrowica.

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Graphic design: Cecilia Undemark Péterfy

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