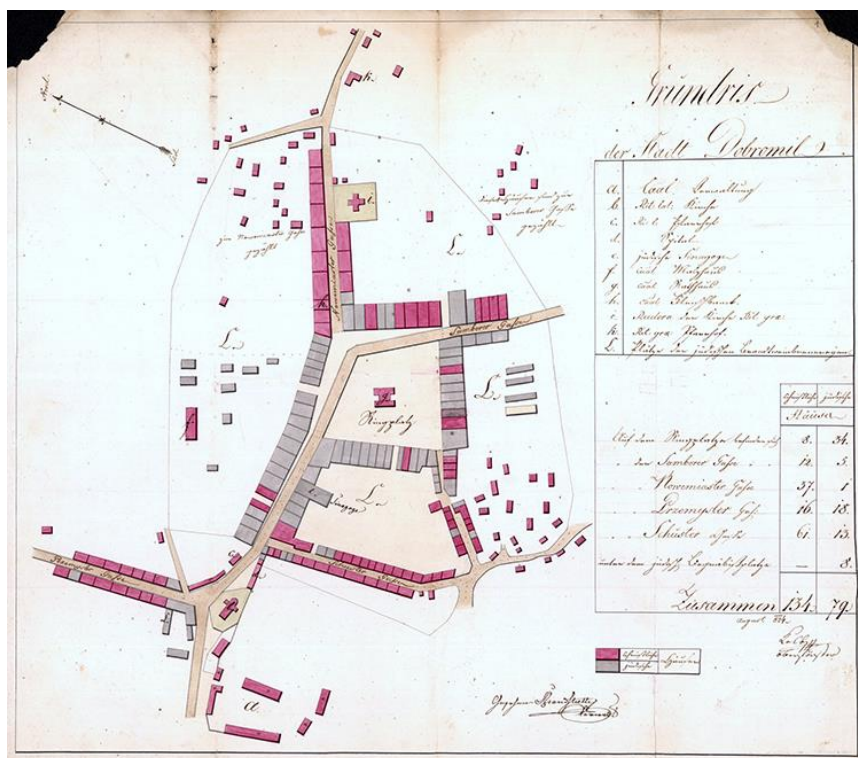# ABOUT THE DOBROMYL JEWISH CEMETERY

A brief description of the Jewish community and cemetery of Dobromyl, Lviv Oblast, Ukraine, together with information about the Jewish headstone recovery project there, and the documentation project which created this data set. Relevant information sources are at the end of this page.

About the Dobromyl Jewish Community

Brief histories of the Dobromyl Jewish community are available in the 1964 Memorial Book of Dobromil (Sefer zikaron lezekher Dobromil) and in texts and online publications researched by the Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Kril. The settlement of Dobromyl (Dobromil in Polish) is first mentioned in records in 1374; the first record of Jews in the town came less than two centuries later, and by 1566 a wooden synagogue had been built on the west side of the market square; a large stone synagogue, known as the Great Synagogue, was erected adjacent to the wooden one in 1591. Initially, Jews lived away from the town center but over time more settled around the square and especially just north and northwest of the center. In 1662 there were barely 120 Jewish residents, mostly very poor, but by the early 1700s there were about 1250 Jews in Dobromyl, making up more than half of the town's total population.

A panoramic photograph of Dobromyl from a 1903 postcard, showing the Jewish cemetery in the background to the north of the city center. Source: Polona.

An 1824 town plan of Dobromyl showing Jewish buildings in grey and non-Jewish buildings in red; the Great Synagogue is labeled. Source: Kraków Archive.

In the 16th through 18th centuries the Jewish community was granted selected privileges several times by Polish kings, the regional landowning Lubomirski family, and the local land-owning Herburt family; these privileges included the right to self-administration through a kahal, the right to establish a cemetery, and rights to practice certain trades, along with certain obligations and restrictions.

Over time Dobromyl was plagued by a series of fires, especially in the adjacent German colony of Engelsbrunn, but was repeatedly rebuilt. An Austrian town layout from 1824 shows the main buildings of the center and along roads radiating from the market square; 79 Jewish homes and service structures are shown colored grey (and the large synagogue is labeled), while 134 non-Jewish buildings are shown colored red. High-scale Austrian regional maps from later in the 19th century as well as Polish maps from the interwar period schematically show the market square with symbols marking churches, the Great Synagogue, and both Jewish and Christian cemeteries.

The Jewish population of Dobromyl remained relatively large, making up more than half of the town's residents for many decades, including 53% in 1860, 66% in 1880 (1918 of 2883, according to the Austrian census) and 61% in 1921 (2119 of 3431, according to the post-WWI Polish census). By the end of the 19th century there were five recorded synagogues in Dobromyl including two which served Hasidic Jews; Jewish children attended both religious and state schools. The town was multicultural and multilingual; as traders many Jews served as intermediaries between Polish, Ukrainian, German, and Jewish residents, so they needed to be capable in four languages including Yiddish. Although Jews were also prominent in crafts (e.g. woodworking, tailoring and clothing production, meat, leather, even watchmaking), the overall wealth of the community was low, especially among the more religious families. Except for the wealthiest,

Prewar buildings in the Dobromyl town center in 2017; the balcony ironwork on the building on the left still has a Star of David. Source: Rohatyn Jewish Heritage.

Jewish families generally lived in simple houses of one or two rooms, often with a clay floor. By the turn of the 20th century, however, some Dobromyl Jews were attentive to secular European concerns and fashions, and many looked to Vienna as the pinnacle of culture.

After World War I, life for Dobromyl Jews now in the Second Polish Republic evolved much as it did elsewhere in former eastern Galicia, marked by increasing engagement with Zionism and Jewish youth groups, educational and professional opportunities for women, a Macabee sports club and Jewish football team, further secularism and even mixed marriages, plus participation in national politics but also increasing restrictions and quotas in some trades.

The invasion of Poland by Germany in 1939 did not physically endanger Dobromyl's Jewish community, though there were economic impacts for the wealthiest Jews once the town was occupied by the Soviets. Initially, Jews were surprised and pleased to hear some Soviet soldiers and officers speaking Yiddish, and the town accepted hundreds of refugees from Przemyśl who had been deported by the German Einsatzgruppe I.

Two views of the Jewish quarter in Dobromyl from 1929. Source: Tobe Blumenstein.

Kai Struve's *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt*, the USHMM *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* and other sources document the progress of the Holocaust in Dobromyl. Germany occupied Dobromyl from late June 1941, and anti-Jewish actions began two days later with the burning of synagogues and a round-up of more than 100 Jews who were subsequently shot to death at a nearby salt mine shaft.

Scenes from the dedication in 2017 of a plaque commemorating Jewish community at the site of the destroyed Great Synagogue of Dobromyl. Source: Darina Balabai.

Under German orders, a Judenrat was formed subject to authority in Przemyśl to administer the Jewish community, a Jewish Police force was created, and a guarded open ghetto was established near the center of Dobromyl, imprisoning 2,400 Jews by the end of 1941. In July 1942, Jews still living in nearby small towns and villages were forced to move to the Dobromyl ghetto; some able-bodied men were separated for marched to labor camps at Przemyśl. On 29 July 1942, the ghetto was liquidated; more than 3000 Jews were assembled at a stadium near the train station, from which they were deported to the Bełżec extermination camp and gassed to death. A few hundred Jews were held back for labor; they were killed at a local sawmill in November 1942 after being forced to dig their own graves. In September 1943, the burned ruin of the Great Synagogue was dismantled and the stones trucked away for use in building barracks. Perhaps a few hundred Jews had hidden outside the ghetto before the liquidation, in

shelters around the town or in nearby forests, sometimes with the aid of local gentiles. Many of those Jews who evaded the ghetto liquidation were captured and killed before the German retreat in 1944, leaving only a small number of survivors.

About the Dobromyl Jewish Cemetery

The Jewish cemetery of Dobromyl in the Lviv oblast of Ukraine is located on a hill among fields north of the town center; the cemetery entrance is approximately 500m north of the Dobromyl city council office on an unnamed road east of T1418 and the Christian cemetery. A lapidarium-style Wall of Memory monument now marks the site, located at GPS 49.57544,22.78356.

The first written record of the cemetery dates from 1612. The cemetery appears on an Austrian-era cadastral map from 1852 with its boundaries at that time precisely outlined (land parcel 299). That map and another from 1814 (documenting the rebuilding of the town after a fire) show a road or allée (a tree-lined path) running up the hill from the former Jewish quarter of Dobromyl; according to Mykhailo Kril, that road (no longer extant) was locally known as ulica Martwa (Dead Street).
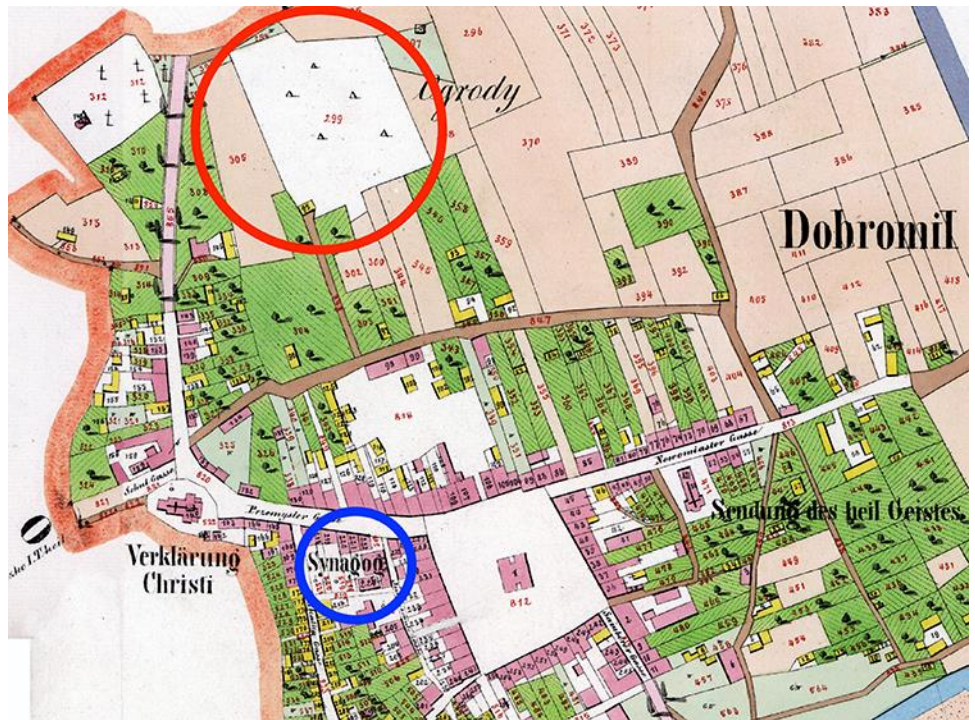
A section of the 1852 cadastral map of Dobromyl, showing the Jewish cemetery (in red) and the Great synagogue (in blue). Source: Przemyśl Archive and Gesher Galicia.

A section of the 1814 town plan of Dobromyl, showing the Jewish cemetery (in red) and the Great synagogue (in blue); north is to the left on this map. Source: Kraków Archive.

A 1903 postcard of Dobromyl which features a panoramic photograph of the town from a vantage point south of the town center and across the Vyrva River includes a distant glimpse of the Jewish cemetery on the hill behind the town (to the north). This view is also interesting because it appears to include the only known prewar image of the Great Synagogue, though from a great distance.

No cemetery records have survived, but it is reasonable to assume from preWWII census data that there have been several thousand burials there of Jewish residents both from Dobromyl itself and from the surrounding villages. Two prewar photos taken in the Jewish cemetery are known to exist: one from 1929 showing two Jewish men standing behind the headstone of what is probably a relative (from the Dobromyl Yizkor Book), and the other a much broader image from 1937 (from Mykhailo Kril's 2017 online article) showing hundreds of stones in a great variety of sizes and shapes. This latter image gives a painful clue to what has been lost in Dobromyl.

In the 1964 Memorial Book of Dobromil (Sefer zikaron le-zekher Dobromil), Walter Artzt reported that during the German occupation of the town the Jews were dragged to the cemetery, made to pull out the matzevot,

Two prewar views from within the Dobromyl Jewish cemetery, taken in 1929 and 1937. Sources: Tobe Blumenstein and Mykhailo Kril.

carry them into town, and pave the streets with them. The IAJGS International Jewish Cemetery Project entry for the Dobromyl cemetery indicates that at the time of the survey in 1996, the cemetery boundaries marked a space which was smaller than in prewar times, and only 1 to 20 tombstones were present, none in their original location.

About the Dobromyl Jewish Headstone Recovery Project and the Wall of Memory

Most of the Jewish tombstones taken from the cemetery during the war remain under roads, bridges, and buildings in Dobromyl; the precise location of the vast majority of those stones is unknown. As reported in an article by Arthur Kurzweil ("The Wall of Memory for the Jews of Dobromil") in the March 2023 edition of Gesher Galicia's quarterly journal The Galizianer, more than 100 tombstones and fragments from the cemetery were used to pave a path at a prewar Jewish home which had been converted into Gestapo headquarters during the occupation. Former Jewish residents of Dobromyl in the US and regional Ukrainian Jewish heritage activists had known about the stones but had been unable to raise funds and administrative support to return the stones to the cemetery, until a Polish news report in 2015 helped to amplify their voices and launch a project. Moshe Rubinfeld of Brooklyn and Ludmila Leventhal of Boston led fundraising, while in Ukraine Oleksandr (Sasha) Nazar of the Sholom Aleichem Society of Jewish Culture and the Lviv Volunteer Center worked with the current homeowner, the Dobromyl city administration, and Dobromyl Mayor Yuriy Petryk to organize and complete a large volunteer recovery effort in early 2016.

The path in Dobromyl paved with Jewish headstones before recovery to the cemetery. Source: Sholem Aleichem Society of Jewish Culture.

Scenes from the Dobromyl Jewish headstone recovery effort in 2016. Source: Sholem Aleichem Society of Jewish Culture.

Then, Dobromyl heritage activist Liubomyr Yatsynych designed and led the construction of a Wall of Memory (Стіна пам'яті in Ukrainian) from the recovered tombstones and fragments at the peak of the Jewish cemetery, with funding arranged by the former Jewish residents of Dobromyl in the US. As reported by the regional news source Dobromylskyi Krai, a dedication ceremony was held at the site on 09 June 2016 attended by Dobromyl and Lviv region heritage activists, Jewish survivors from Israel and Ukraine, a rabbi and a priest, and Dobromyl city officials. Additional photos of the monument are available on Wikimedia Commons for free reuse as sharealike with attribution (CC BY-SA 4.0).


The dedication ceremony for the Wall of Memory in the Dobromyl Jewish cemetery in 2016. Source: dobromyl.org.

About the Dobromyl Jewish Headstone Documentation Project

Photographs of the recovered headstones as installed in the Wall of Memory were taken in 2017, 2019, and 2023 by Sasha Nazar and Jay Osborn on behalf of the Sholom Aleichem Society of Jewish Culture in Lviv. Working from photographs, Gerald Pragier transcribed the Hebrew/Yiddish epitaphs and then translated them into English, adding explanatory footnotes where deemed appropriate. Thereafter, Sasha Nazar and Tetiana Fedoriv provided the parallel Ukrainian translations for these Dobromyl gravestones. See the available guide and notes pages more information about the transcription conventions used and some further observations.
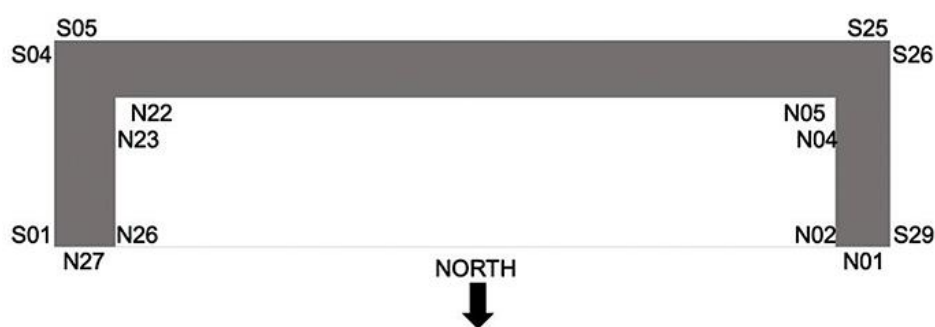

*Photographing the headstones in the Wall of Memory in 2023. Source: Rohatyn Jewish Heritage.*
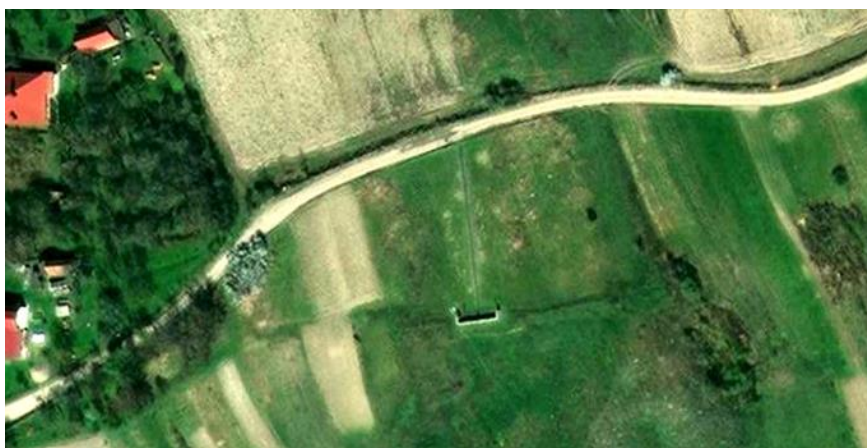
A satellite image of the Dobromyl Jewish cemetery in 2023 showing the Wall of Memory at the center of the view; north is up in the image. Source: Microsoft Bing and Maxar.

Each of the individual headstones and fragments were location-coded to aid visitors to the cemetery to identify stones and find them in the database. A schematic of the monument in top (aerial) view is shown below. The primary faces of the monument are defined as generally North-facing (N) and generally South-facing (S); the north-facing stones are on the front and inner walls of the monument as approached from the road, while the south-facing stones are on the rear and outer walls (toward the town center). Stone locations are numbered by columns sequentially right to left across the faces (in a clockwise direction as viewed from above) beginning with column 1 on each face. Within each column, stones are lettered from top to bottom as A, B, and occasionally C, as shown in the sketch to the right below.
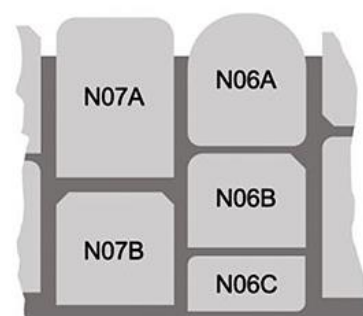
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- [Facebook post with photos of the headstone recovery effort](#), 7 March 2016, on the page of Roman Tsytsyk

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- ["9 червня у Добромилі на місці єврейського цвинтаря відкриють Стіну Пам'яті"](#) (On June 9, the Wall of Remembrance will be opened in Dobromyl on the site of the Jewish cemetery); notice 06Jun2016, on the internet magazine [Добромильський Край](#) (also [on the Internet Archive](#))

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Sasha Nazar at the Wall of Memory in the Jewish cemetery in Dobromyl. Source: Rohatyn Jewish Heritage.

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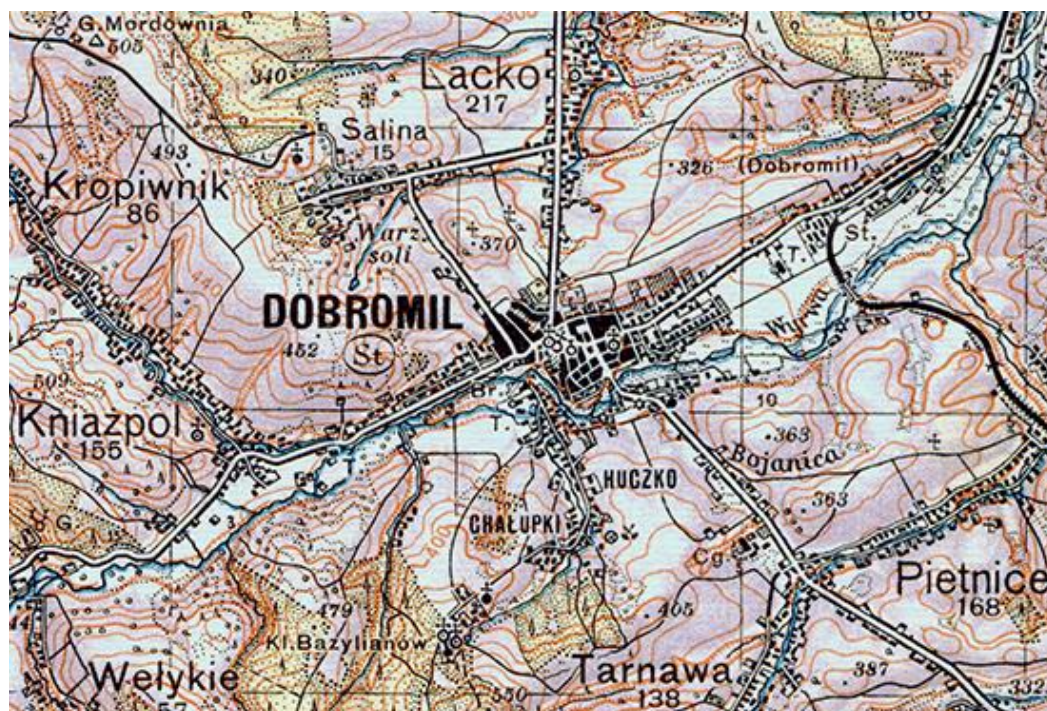
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Excerpt from a 1938 topographic map showing Dobromyl and surrounding villages; the Jewish cemetery and synagogue are marked with T symbols. Source: Polona.

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