

Czech Torah Scrolls journey and its relevancy to family history research

PP presentation can be found at : www.toledot.org/journey.pdf

Handout follows here ↓

Historic preview

It is believed that leaders of the Jewish community in Prague somehow managed to persuade the Nazis to authorise them to bring all the Scrolls (and other artefacts) from countryside's synagogues to Prague where a band of expert curators catalogued them.

The Scrolls were identified by the town from which they had been received. Most of these brave curators perished, but the Scrolls and their records survived as their legacy.

The Scrolls were eventually stored in the synagogue in the Prague suburb of Michle, where they lay, to all intents and purposes forgotten, for many years.

In 1964, the Czechoslovak State sold 1.564 Czech Torah Scrolls to a British philanthropist who helped to create the Memorial Scrolls Trust in Westminster Synagogue, London. The Scrolls thus became Memorial Torah Scrolls.

The Scrolls were sorted, examined and catalogued, and a Memorial Scrolls Committee began to distribute them on loan to congregations and academic institutions around the world. Over 1,000 Torah Scrolls are in congregations throughout the US.

Reference and further reading:

Phillipa Bernard : Out of the Midst of the Fire (London, 2005)

Czech & Slovak Torah Connections (NLPS, London, 2010)

Second Life of Czech Torah Scrolls (Prague, 2006)

Framework

The research project was launched to explore how the former homes to the Scrolls look like today, and whether there is a memory of disappeared Jewish communities.

The handout is aimed to show the findings collected during a journey taken by Sheila Pallay, photographer, and Julius Müller, family historian, to Torah Scrolls acquisition points and to present the variety of resources available for family history research before the war, during the war and after Shoah.

We have visited 138 towns and villages in the Protectorate Böhmen und Mähren (109 places on the list of Scroll acquisition points and surrounding communities which merged in 1930ties). We contacted the relevant bodies and individuals in advance. That enables us to see the interiors of former synagogues which are hardly available to the public, and to talk to historians, NGO people, municipality clerks and chroniclers/chroniclerwomen.

We prepared the itinerary day by day and we spent then 3.5 months by travelling throughout the Czech Republic; Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.

The journey brought enormous amount of information, original photographs, stories, and new findings. We are aware that our list is far from being complete.

We made contacts with municipalities, local museums, schools, historians, and also with private citizens, churches and NGOs who care for and have reconstructed former synagogues. We are willing to share it with family historians who are interested.

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Pre-WWII resources

The monumental work of Hugo Gold's team (1929, 1934)

www.hugogold.com

(Memorial book of lost Jewish communities in Moravia (Tel Aviv, 1974)

Czech-Jewish Calendar (1881 -1939)

www.digitalniknihovna.cz/zmp/periodical/uuid:ae6ef6fc-435d-11dd-b505-00145e5790ea

Yearbook of the Society for Jewish History in the Czech Republic(1929 -1938)

sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/cm/periodical/titleinfo/2644300

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Post-WWII resources

Encyclopedias (Fiedler, Rozkosna, Klenovsky, Gruber)

Jews of Czechoslovakia (1968)

Judaica Bohemiae (1965 -

Booklets and Conferences' Proceedings

- Jews and Moravia (organized yearly since 1994 –

- Jews in Bohemia (organized bi-yearly since 2000 –

Booklets and Conferences' Proceedings

Places in the proceedings of annual conference **The Jews and Moravia.**

Batelov, Bohumín, Boskovice, Břeclav, Brno, Bučovice,

Dolní Bolíkov,

Frýdek, Frýdlant nad Ostravicí,

Holešov, Hranice, Ivančice, Jihlava,

Kojetín, Krnov, Kroměříž, Lipník, Lomnice, Loštice,

Markvarec, Michálkovice, Mikulov, Moravský Krumlov,

Olomouc, Olšany, Ostrava,

Písečné, Pohořelice, Prostějov, Přerov, Příbor,

Rousínov, Rožnov,

Slavkov, Slavonice, Staré Hobzí, Šternberk, Strážnice,

Třebíč,
Uherský Ostroh,
Valašské Meziříčí, Velké Meziříčí, Vizovice, Vsetín.

Family histories in the proceedings of annual conference **The Jews and Moravia :**

Kwasník-Rabinowiczov family, Löw-Beer family (Boskovice),
L. Blum Otto Eisler, B. Tauber, H. J. Tauber, A.Ticho, I. Welisch, P. Winterstein-Gafni (Brno),
Kohn family (Frenštát),
J. Hoitash V. Oppenheimer, F. Redlich (Hodonín),
J. Kulka, Shabatai haKohen (Holešov),
L.Kohn-Zerkowitz, M.Spitzer (Hranice),
E. Lichtblau-Leskly (Hrušov),
Grünfeld, Mahler family, R. Weissenstein (Jihlava),
S. Kolisch (Koryčany),
H. Lorm (Mikulov),
J. David, A. Donath, M. Spielmann (Kroměříž),
Lichtenstern family, H. Löw (Koloředov),
R. Feder, A. Fischl, B. K. Fisera, J. Gartner, E. Graf, Groag family, H. Iltis, T. Klein, T. Kohn, Z.
Shek (Olomouc),
S.Scharf (Orlova),
Gronner brothers, A. Hilf, H. Haas, A. Roth, A.Rysavy, W. Stiasny, M. Strassmann, J.
Wechsberg (Ostrava),
R. Bacher, Bäck family, L. Beer Ebner F. Ehrenstamm, W. Kohn, J.Neumann, I. Rottberger, M.
Steinschneider, M.Zweig (Prostějov),
M. Böhm, I.Buchsbaum (Přívoz),
Neumann family (Radvanice),
Reiss family (Strážnice),
Nagl family (Telč),
L. Askenazy (Těšín),
Paul März-Meretz (Uherské Hradiště),
A. Schön (Uherský Brod),
Steinhardt family (Valašská Bystřice),
Wechsberg family, Weinberger family (Znojmo)

Places in the proceedings of bi-annual conference Jews in Bohemia

Bezručice, Bílina,
Český Krumlov,
Chomutov, Chrudim,
Duchcov,
Havlíčkův Brod,
Jablonec,
Kladno, Klatovy,
Litvínov,
Most,
Nýrsko,

Pardubice, Planá, Postoloprty,
Sobědruhy, Staré Město (Janštejn), Stříbro,
Tachov, Teplice, Trutnov, Turnov,
Udlice and
Žacléř.

Family histories in the proceedings of bi-annual conference Jews in Bohemia :

Heisler family (Chrast), L. Hartman (Kdyně),
Katz family (Jistebnice),
K.Fischer Pollak (Karlovy Vary),
Böhm family (Kladno),
Ascherman family Z. Feldman, Heller family, H.Polacek (Kolin),
Stross family (Libava Udoli),
Spitz family (Most),
A. Löwy (Planá),
Mandelik family (Ratboř),
Glaser family (Velim),
B. Steiner (Zbraslavice),

The **family history in many places we visited** has been thoroughly studied and documented by various initiatives :

- by local NGOs
- by institutions, namely by local schools
- by local librarians and historians
- by initiative named Missing Neighbours = Zmizeli Sousedé
- initiated by Marta Vančurová from Prague Jewish Museum
- by the congregations from abroad who visited the sites
and who keep in contact or coming regularly
- by several University's Departments - Diploma and PhD Thesis

Structure of the presentation

For this paper we selected 22 places to present how various resource - sometimes overlapping for good - can bring a lot of family data; some are available online and some are available upon request and/or in bigger libraries and bookstores

Divišov
Heřmanův Městec
Horažďovice
Chotěboř
Jihlava
Kladno
Klatovy
Kolín
Ledeč nad Sázavou

Lipník nad Bečvou
Loštice
Louny
Milevsko
Náchod
Olomouc
Pacov
Prostějov
Přeštice
Slaný
Soběslav
Třešť
Vodňany

We collected the names of last rabbis, shameses, and the stories of family members - both shoah victims and the survivors.

A new generation of Czech scholars (teachers, historians, archivists) became interested In Czech Jewish heritage.

Along with other projects like

- Gemeinde View at Czech-Austria SIG and/or
- Geni-based Jewish Communities in Bohemia and Moravia, CR,

we can provide the interested parties with relevant contacts, historic background and the present state. DON'T HESITATE to contact us.

Several congregations abroad incl. Westminster Synagogue, London, Fairfield Lawn, NJ, NPLS, London, published booklets about the towns and the Scrolls they are hosting and taking care of.

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