

Gone But Not Forgotten:

THE JEWISH HISTORY OF ŠEDUVA, LITHUANIA

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INTRODUCTION

Šeduva is a small, quiet town with no skyscrapers around for miles. It is north (7) of Vilnius -- Lithuania's capital city -- and upon first glancing at it, one probably wouldn't realize the turmoil its former inhabitants endured throughout the devastating years of World War II. Many of these inhabitants were Jews.

BEFORE THE WAR

In the late 1800s, Jews were a majority in Šeduva, with approximately 2,386 of a total 3,783 inhabitants being Jewish (5). Prior to World War II, the Jewish shtetl – or village (7) -- of Šeduva was thriving; occupants held a variety of jobs, such as those in trade and agriculture (5). Jewish community members had an estimated four synagogues available to them for gatherings and worship services (6). Two of them are pictured below.



A WWII-era aerial photo of Šeduva with two of the synagogues that once stood there marked by yellow numbers (1 and 2). Contributed photo.



A few citizens stand in front of one of the town's synagogues. Worth noting is the Hebrew lettering used in place of Latin lettering. Contributed photo.

ŠEDUVA UNDER SIEGE

Nazi forces invaded Lithuania on June 22, 1941, as part of their Operation Barbarossa (7). Three days later, on June 25, 1941, these forces overtook Šeduva (5), aided by local sympathizers. Within days, each of the Jews were pushed out of their homes and into a ghetto, walled in by barbed wire; it was merely a month before they were all murdered at mass execution sites in the nearby forests of Pakuteniai and Liaudiškiai (5). 664 Jews brutally lost their lives, leaving Šeduva without any Jews at all (5). The Jewish community had been systematically destroyed within three months (5).



A map showing Šeduva's location in relation to the rest of Lithuania and nearby countries. Contributed photo.

SEARCHING FOR CLUES

Upon arriving in Šeduva, we stopped to walk in the Jewish cemetery, which was in use until World War (1). We then drove to our data collection site, which is now a paved lot situated just around the corner from a convenience store. This lot was once home to two of Šeduva's synagogues (see photos at bottom left).

OUR PROCESS

The team spent several hours collecting topographical data as well as ground-penetrating radar (GPR) data to look for abnormalities beneath the ground. For more on the methods and results, see "Locating the Former Synagogue of Šeduva, Lithuania" (Schneider et al.)



Student researchers Joseph Beck and Samuel Schneider collecting GPR data on the paved lot. Contributed photo.

The synagogue that once stood in our data-collection location. Any significant results would likely pertain to this synagogue.



POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Our team was only able to spend a day in Šeduva, but future research could focus more on the Jewish cemetery there. Many of the headstones have crumbled away over the years, but the Lost Shtetl team is working to restore them (1) as well as overseeing the building of a museum dedicated to the Jewish history of Šeduva (2). The museum is expected to be completed in 2020 (4).

SOURCES

1. Jewish cemetery The Lost Shtetl, <http://lostshtetl.com/jewish-cemetery/> (accessed April 2019).
2. The Project The Lost Shtetl, <http://lostshtetl.com/the-project/> (accessed April 2019).
3. Holocaust sites The Lost Shtetl, <http://lostshtetl.com/holocaust-sites/> (accessed April 2019).
4. Museum project The Lost Shtetl, <http://lostshtetl.com/museum-project/> (accessed April 2019).
5. Šeduva Jewish history guidelines The Lost Shtetl, <http://lostshtetl.com/history-guidelines/> (accessed April 2019).
6. Personal Communication, Jon Seligman, "Searching for the Lost Synagogues of Šeduva".
7. Personal Communication, Samuel G. Schneider, "Locating the Former Synagogue of Šeduva, Lithuania," 2019.

REMNANTS OF HISTORY



In the local restaurant where we ate a late lunch after collecting data, there was a section of the menu devoted to foods with traditional Jewish ingredients and flavors. Pictured above is a falafel dish served with fresh vegetables and olive oil.

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At right, a blueprint of one of the synagogues. It is believed to have been created by Nazi forces. For more on this synagogue, see the last column. Contributed photo.

