Alternate names: Joniškis [Lith], Yanishok [Yid], Yonishki [Rus], Janiszki [Pol], Jonischken [Ger], Jonišķi [Latv], Yonishkis, Yanishki, Joniškio, Jonischki, Ionishkis, Janischki, Yanishke, Yenishok, Yonishok, Russian: Янишки. יאַנישאָק - Yiddish. **56°14' N, 23°37' E ,** 24 miles NNE of Šiauliai (Shavl). 1900 Jewish population: 2,272.

*Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego
(1880-1902), III, p. 405: "Janiszki" #12.*

photos of
 synagogues
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 Photos
and history. Joniskis, a town of approximately 12,000 people, is located 250 km N of Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, and 20 km S of the Latvian border.
 Shtetlink
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. Jews lived and traded in Joniškis villages, but did not in the town at the beginning of the 18 th

century because about 1712 the town denied Jews trade since their villages in the surrounds had taverns ("sinkus). A fire in 1753 in which seven houses or farmsteads burned began when a Joniskis' Jew set fire to his neighbour's house (source - Koscialkowski and Hryskiewic). In 1756, 19 Jews had shops. The kahal had eleven contracts including four to sell salt and one for a mead bar in Žagarė. The kahal paid for the mikvah and the cemeteries.

In 1771 and 1772 they obtained the right to trade in the markets and fairs, but were forbidden to sell alcoholic drinks. By the end of the 18 th

century, 88 Jews (52 men in the town and 5 in Kalnelis) lived in Joniškis, probably from Siauliai and Alytus. The increasing Jewish population built a synagogue and a cemetery. In the early 19th century, Jews seem to have been involved heavily in smuggling goods from other countries. In 1847, 1042 Jews lived there, but in 1848, about 300 Jews and 16 Christians died of a cholera epidemic. The Jews of Joniškis had a school, three synagogues, and a cemetery. A train route was built through Joniskis to Riga in the 19th century. Fairs and horses fairs in Joniškis attracted merchants from Latvia, Germany, Russia, and Poland. In the late 1800s, some Jewish families did small vegetable farming on leased land mostly on Mintaujos

(Livonijos) street that they sold in Riga or Jelgava. Some of Jews were the carters. The White (built in 1823) and Red (1865) synagogues, a prayer house, shops, tearooms, and homes were in the town center on the main streets of Livonijos, Upytės, and Šiauliaiat the end of the 19 th

century. In the 20th century, Most Jews still were traders with shops called manufackturomis, houses, and tearooms around the town square. They sold clothing, shoes, haberdashery, foods, and spices.

Manufackturomis

were workshops or small factories of handmade goods such as bicycles. Singer sewing machines were sold in Joniškis and in the villages. Jews had a mill and a few bakeries. The 1939 Jewish population was 1,200. [March 2009]

VIDEO: [Kaunas 9 th forth-Saulenai-Sauliai-Joniskis-Taurage-Vainutas-Silute-Telsiai-Mazheiki-Leckava-Bauska](#) (195KB) - Visit the archives in Kaunas, then terrible Nazi prison 9th fort. See the cemetery in Shavlyan, old synagogues in Shavel, Joniskis, Taurage. Jewish cemetery and famous Yeshiva in Telsiai, listen the interview with the leader of community in Yiddish. Leckava- the cemetery and the town. Bauska- views of the old town and the exhibition "Jews in Bauska" in local Museum. [March 2009]

REFERENCE: *Life of the Jews of Joniskis Region during the Inter-War Period (1918-1940)* Short book about the Life of the Jews of Joniskis Region during the Inter-War Period (1918-1940). ISBN/ISSN : 9955-564-47-4. 63 pages. Language: Lithuanian. [March 2009]

CEMETERY: "We visited the old Joniskis Jewish Cemetery in April 1999. The cemetery lies Northeast of the town. Leaving the town along Livonyas Road in the direction to Latvia is a dirt road diagonally to the right. After travelling along this dirt road for about a third of a mile, an isolated (but inhabited) small wooden farm building lies about fifty yards back from the road on the left. The cemetery gate is beside this building. The small building formerly belong to the cemetery but is now a home to Mrs. Kundrotiene. At the entrance is a plaque indicating that this is the old Jewish Cemetery of Joniskis. The west and north boundaries are flanked by trees. The entry area appears as an open (but fenced) field, with a few standing tombstones on either side. The stones on the immediate left side date from around 1920; those on the immediate right side date from around 1900. Most of these were legible with effort. We have noted the details. In the main area of the field are fragments of tombstones, none of which can be read. At the back and moving round to the right (east) behind the farmhouse are more stones, which are standing. Those to the right (east) date from around 1890; most of these can be read with effort. We have noted the details. The largest and best-preserved area lies in a small copse at the Northeast corner of the cemetery. Apparently, the trees have protected these stones from vandalism and weather deterioration. We have noted the details of a few of the stones in this

area, but time did not allow us to detail many more. Overall, we collected details of about ninety tombstones in this cemetery. Some have surnames. In particular, most of the stones in the 'copse' area (which are largely post-1900) do appear to carry surnames. We estimate that about 400 tombstones stand in the cemetery, most of which can be read. The overall size of the cemetery suggests that it probably contained in excess of 2,000 graves." If you are looking for a family member who might be buried in this cemetery, please contact Yael Driver , the source of this information. [May 2001]

MASS GRAVE: In 1939, 200 Jews remaining in the village were force marched into the woods, murdered and buried in a mass grave. The Lithuanian government subsequently has put up a small monument at the site of the mass grave. Mendel Kapalan, chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, has been to Lithuania twice and may have more information. Source: Avi Joffe   .

Forest of Vilkiaugis, 5 km from Joniskis and(Joniskis district) Zagare , town park.
HOLOCAUST: At the beginning of July, all the Jews were relocated to one neighbour-hood in Zagare
, which was declared a ghetto and cordoned off by an unguarded barbed wire fence. Surviving Jews were brought to Zagare from Kursenai, Papile, Tryskiai, Joniskis, Zeimelis, Kriukai, Radviliskis, Saukenai, Kelme, Tirksliai, Krakes, Joniskelis, Linkuva, Pakruojis, Laukuvas, Lygumai and other places. A total of seven thousand Jews were gathered in the ghetto during this period. [March 2009]