Alternate names: Kalisz [Pol], Kalish [Rus, Yid], Kalisch [Ger], Calisia [Lat], Kolish, Russian: Калиш. 51°45' N, 18°05' E, 59 miles W of Łódź. Kalisz was a gubernia in Congress Poland, 1867-1918. 1900 Jewish population: 7,580.


This city in central Poland with 107,910 inhabitants in 2008 on the Prosna river in the SE part of the Greater Poland Voivodeship forms a conurbation with the nearby towns of Ostrów Wielkopolski and Nowe Skalmierzyce. Kalisz is an important regional industrial and commercial center with many notable factories. The city is also a center for traditional folk art. Long considered the oldest town of Poland because of Ptolemy mentioned it, the claim is doubtful. In 1264, Prince Bolesław V the Chaste, ruler of the western part of Poland (Wielkopolska), granted the first charter of settlement rights, legal protection, and certain religious and financial freedoms for the local Jewish community. This "Statute of Kalisz" (largely copied from a similar statute in neighboring Bohemia) was extended to the whole country by King Casimir the Great and expanded by later Polish rulers and was the legal foundation for Jewish rights in Poland. Jewish History and more history. [May 2009]

OLD CEMETERY: The first, established at the end of 18th century on the hill between the villages of Dobrzec and Rypinek, is on the site called "On czaszkach" at today's streets: ulicami: Skalmierzycką, Handlową, and Nowy Świat. Prince Przemyslaw II enabled the purchase of land for the cemetery in 1287 as follows in documentation: "Rupinjusz, the son of Jews and Jaska kaliscy, ... said of his own free will that of his savings ... of his inherited wealth Podgórze ... their community [needs] the cemetery for elderly Jews; fees for the century are 9 and 2 talents of pepper saffron." The cemetery was used for the next several hundred years and completely destroyed during WWII. Antique gravestones, at the order of the Nazis,
were used to shore up the banks of the Prosna. In 1946, by decree, the State Treasury acquired the "abandoned" cemetery land. Subsequently, the site between blocks of flats contains an educational center for children with special needs and the ambulance station.

**NEW CEMETERY:** At the end of the 19th century, the old Jewish cemetery was full. The new cemetery was established on the parcel at the current ul. Podmiejskiej 21. Initially, a large group of Jews did not want to bury their dead here, preferring the old cemetery, but, after the death of Rabbi Lipszyc Jecheskiela on March 21, 1932, this changed. Since his funeral, the new Jewish cemetery was widely accepted. In 1921, the cemetery fence was built and then the stable. In 1926, the preburial house construction commenced. The cemetery survived the Holocaust in relatively good condition, but the abandoned cemetery slowly fell into oblivion and neglect. For the inhabitants, the cemetery's gravestones became recreation for children and alcohol-laden hooligans. This raised concerns of local Jews. As a result of their protests in 1985-88, the authorities decided to fence the cemetery, but process of decay continued. In the local newspaper, Baruch "Bolek" Kolski said that in 1988 he visited the cemetery where his father is buried and had "difficulty through the wild growing bushes, grasses, weeds, piles of rubbish. I knew that after the war, there were 3,000 graves. Unfortunately, only two hundred of them are visible. When I came back to in 1993, only 95 graves. Then, there were now fewer and fewer. ...". The chance to restore the cemetery came at the end of the 1980s. Baruch Kolski encouraged Jew abroad, who were born in Kalisz, and worked with Dr. Edmund Luczak, winner of the medal "Righteous Among the Nations". Land cemetery was cleared. Electronic and photographic documentation of the preserved gravestones was made. Financial support came from Mr Zenon Sroczyński, co-owner Hellen SA, to renovate the preburial house and a tahara in the memory of Kalisz Jews. In 1989, the Nissenbaum Family Foundation and huge financial support of the Association Kaliszian in Israel managed to recover about two-one thousand historic matzevot used by the Germans in the river. The main entrance to the cemetery is from ul. Podmiejskiej. On the right side of the gate is the renovated preburial house, now functioning as a memorial meeting house holding a collection of photos, many books, articles, and other memorabilia of the Kalisz Jewish population including a complete Torah scroll and ritual candlesticks. The building also functions for classroom lectures for schools and conferences on Jewish topics. On the left side of the entrance are the ruins of a brick building from the 1930s, a monument dedicated to victims of the Holocaust, unveiled in 1967 for ashes of a destroyed Jewish cemetery in Błaszkach. In the southern part is an obelisk commemorating the Jews murdered 1939-1945. In the middle of the cemetery are preserved gravestones partly in suit and others flat on the ground or set vertically. They are typical gravestones of the beginning of the 20th century with inscriptions in Hebrew, Polish and German. Two ohel are noteworthy. Built for Jecheskiela Lipszyc and Rabbi Jeszajahu Weldfrejd, they were restored about 1989 by the workshop of Szaję Kawę in Israel. The cemetery also has a symbolic grave of Kalisz Jews murdered in the Holocaust, erected after the war by their families. In the cemetery wall are fragments. This valuable gallery of Jewish sepulchre art still includes unique remnants of original polychrome. Admission to the cemetery is available by prior arrangement with the cemetery supervisor, Mr. Halina Marcinkowska, tel 600 067 956, E-mail: hila@jewish.org.pl
photos
text and drawings
gravestone photos
[May 2009]

The Lauder Foundation Genealogy Project [ reisner@plearn.edu.pl ] has burial lists. See the general Poland file. I spent three weeks in Kalisz in summer 1999 teaching at UNESCO English Language Camp. During that time, I found out that Kalisz had 2 cemeteries at one point in time. Apartment complexes now cover one on Nowy Swiat. The other is enclosed with a nice, locked fence. Apartment blocks surround it. Debris and waste surround the outer walls of the cemetery. Homeless men seem to live there. I heard a story that the gravestones from the cemetery (I don't know which one) were thrown in the river. I think they have been retrieved, but can't recall what was planned for them. Source: Debbie RAFF; seraff@sprintmail.com, California [March 2000]

KALISZ I: US Commission No. POCE000469 Map

Kalisz (I) is located in region Kaliskie at 51°45 18°05, 94 km. WSW of Lodz. The new cemetery: Podmiejska 21. Present town population is over 100,000 with less than 10 Jews.

- Interested: The Foundation of the Family Nissenbaum, Twarda 6, 00-105 Warszawa region, tel. 241477.
- Person with key: Police station, 7 Serbinowska st., Urzad Miejski (town hall) Wydzial Infrastruktury Miejskiej (Department of Urban Infrastructure), tel. 30424.

The earliest known Jewish community in Kalisz was mid-13th century. 1921 Jewish population was 15,556. In the 7th century, this Jewish community was one of the most important in Greater Poland. Living here was Rabbi Abraham Abele Gombiner, 1656-1683 and Rabbi Salomon ben Akiba Eiger, about 1835-40. The Jewish cemetery was established late 19th century with last burial after WWII. Buried in cemetery: Rabbi Ezechiel Liebschitz, died 1932 (the Chief Rabbi of Poland). Jewish community was Hasidic Orthodox (Gora Kalwaria, Kock,
Warka) and Progressive/Reform. Other villages (names not given) used the unlandmarked cemetery. The isolated urban crown of a hill has plaque in Polish that mentions Jews and a Star of David on the gate or wall. Reached by turning directly off a public road, access is entirely closed with a fence and locked gate. The present size of the cemetery is 1.1 hectares. 700 gravestones exist, 100-500 in original locations with 25%-50% toppled or broken. About 500 gravestones from the old cemetery (see Kalisz II) have been placed in this cemetery. The granite and sandstone finely smoothed and inscribed, or flat stones with carved relief decorations have Hebrew and Polish inscriptions. The cemetery contains special memorial monuments to Holocaust victims and marked mass graves. The municipality owns site used for Jewish cemetery only. Properties adjacent to cemetery is residential and a public main street. Compared to 1939, the cemetery boundaries are the same. Occasionally, organized Jewish groups and individual tours, and private visitors stop. The cemetery was vandalized during WWII and occasionally afterwards. Local municipal and regional authorities cleaned stones, cleared vegetation, and constructed wall and gate in 1988. Authorities clean or clear occasionally. Within the limits of the cemetery are 2 pre-burial houses and an ohel. The pre-burial house interior was rebuilt. Security and vandalism are moderate threats. In 1991, unknown perpetrators burned the pre-burial house.


KALISZ II: US Commission No. POCE000470

Kalisz (II), the old cemetery, see Kalisz (I) for town information. Cemetery does not exist (see Kalisz I) but was at Ulica Nowy Świat, Handlowa, Skalmiezycka. School: Specjalny Ośrodek Szkolno-Wychowawczy im. Janusza Korozaka. Director: Mr. Stanislaw Sikorski may have more information. The Jewish cemetery was established in 1287. The Jewish community was Hasidic Orthodox and Progressive/Reform. The isolated urban flat land with small hill at the cemetery area, has no sign or marker. Reached by turning directly off a public road, access is open to all with no wall or gate. The size of the cemetery before WWII was 1 hectare; present size impossible to determine. There are no gravestones but surviving stones (about 500) were removed to the new cemetery at Posmiejska St. (see Kalisz I). Some probably are near the factory at Kosciuszki-Koperuika St. Some gravestones were incorporated into roads and structures. See Kalisz (I) for tombstone description. The Municipality owns property used for recreation, a school, and a first-aid station. Properties adjacent are residential. The cemetery was vandalized during WWII. See Kalisz (I) for survey information. Person interviewed: Stanislaw Sikorski, director of the school, and Mr Lech Narabski WKZ of Kalisz Voievodship.