Alternate names: Wieliczka [Pol], Vilietchka [Yid], Velichka. 49° 59' N, 20° 04' E, 10 miles SE of Kraków. 1900 Jewish population: 981.

Yizkor: Kehilat Wieliczka; sefer zikaron (Tel Aviv, 1980).


This town in S Poland in the Kraków metropolitan area and situated (since 1999) in Lesser Poland Voivodeship and previously in Kraków Voivodeship (1975-1998). Wieliczka Salt Mine, one of the world’s oldest operating salt mines, has been in operation since prehistoric times. Beside the town of Wieliczka, Gmina Wieliczka contains the villages and settlements of Brzegi, Byszyce, Chorągwica, Czarnochowice, Dobranowice, Golkowice, Gorzków, Grabie, Grabówki, Grajów, Jankówka, Janowice, Kokotów, Koźmice Male, Koźmice Wielkie, Lednica Górna, Mała Wieś, Mietniów, Pawlikowice, Podstolice, Raciborsko, Rożnowa, Siercza, Śledziejowice, Strumiani, Sułków, Sygneczów, Węgrzce Wielkie and Zabawa. [July 2009]

Jews here were involved in trade in the 14th century due to a salt mine. In 1566 King Zygmunt August forbade Jewish settlement in Wieliczka, but a Jewish cemetery existed on the western edge of the city near Klasno and Grabóówki (neighboring settlements). In 1780, the Jews founded a hospital. Restrictions on settlements were abolished in 1867; however, the large influx of Jews began ten years later after a great fire in the city and the founding of the kahal. Jewish population: 1893 - 614 (10.3%), 1900 - 981 (15.6%), and 1939 about 1,300 (nearly 50%). Between summer 1940 and spring 1941 the Jewish population swelled to 8,000 people when in May 1941 the Nazis created a ghetto that included the local Jews and some from Krakow, Dobrzyca, Gdów and Niepolomice. The Nazis held a mass execution of staff and patients of the Jewish hospital, shooting them in Forest Niepolomickiej. Most inhabitants of the
ghetto were deported to Belzec. Separately, Jews were sent to forced labor camp in Stalowa Wola and to the concentration camp at Płaszów. In 1944, the Germans opened a forced labor camp for Jews with about 1,700 people in sub-Płaszów. The underground factory manufactured sheathing for the He-219 aircraft. All Jews imprisoned were deported to various German concentration camps. Three synagogue buildings remain. At Seraf 13 is the 1911 building that possibly was the beit midrash. Since WWI, that became a home and workshop. The owner of the building is a cooperative Inwalidów “Ray.” Przy ul. The old synagogue built in the mid-18th century constructed of broken stone and concrete. Vandalized during WWII, after the war, it served as a warehouse. Outside are remnants of Jewish decorations such as the window from the east. Inside, a cavity for the aron kodesh, traces of the painted inscriptions and fragments of ornaments and plant decorations could be seen. In 1980, a renovation of the building took place. To the west, the eighteenth-century synagogue (according to some sources from the early 19th century) stands. For several years locals stole housing construction materials from here. The owner of both buildings is the State, although the land on which they stand still belongs to the Jewish community. [July 2009]

CEMETERY:

- In the 18th century Jewish cemetery was situated in the historical Sierczy (Klasno) Wieliczka Salt Mine near the border, west of the “Jewish town” on the slope of the hill across the area originally belonging to the manor in Sierczy. The Jewish community used this cemetery about 10 km away until the last burial in 1942. Before the war, the cemetery area was 1.92 ha and now is only 1.78 ha because land was turned over for agriculture. About fifty granite, sandstone and limestone gravestones remain, the oldest from the eighteenth century. On the eastern edge, the government erected several pillars and a granite Holocaust memorial built by Jews who survived the Holocaust. Carved are the names Katz, Zellner, Goldman, Kichler. "In Memory of over one thousand Polish Jews murdered in Wieliczka by Nazi tormentors in the years 1939 - 42". After many years of neglect, it slowly disappeared.. Before the war, the area was surrounded with stone-slate fence with neat alleys and marble tombstones evenly distributed over tended grass. Adam Aptowicz with Israel Friendship Society - Poland asked the mayor and Starost wielickiego Wieliczki in 2005 to stop the devastation. Local authorities agreed, but the cemetery land belongs to the State Treasury. The solution could be to transfer the land for Jewish community in Krakow. In June 2006, the group arrived with 150 representatives from various military groups like the Officers School in Tel Aviv with General Avi Ashkenazi and Gen Harid. The court ordered former area of the cemetery turned over. In October six pupils from the National School of Fine Arts in Krakow set up a group entitled
“Life of Artistic Inspiration”
for a monument to the victims of the Holocaust

One of the steps is the creation of the Victims of the Holocaust Memorial Trail, which is to begin at the parking lot (around the old boiling plant on ul Dembowskiego. Information signs the show the way to the Grabówki, cemetery, and the monument. The cemetery, the synagogue and the cheder are on the parth to the Upper Market and the streets Seraf Limanowskiego. The last "stop" on the route is the railway station where the Jews were sent to concentration camps. To be involved in a local youth group, they must interview elders for family memories of the Holocaust and knowledge of the pre-and post-war fate of those former inhabitants. In addition, a book will be released called the *Diary of Mary Bajorkowej*, who witnessed the events of 1942. (Excerpts from the diary, as well as memories of other Jewish residents of Wieliczka, can be found in *Księdzie Memorial Wieliczki*).

- Video
- Photos
- Photos
  - burial list [Jan 2015]

US Commission No. AS 198

The town is located at 49°59 N 20°03 E, 10 km SE of Cracow in Krakow region. Cemetery: follow Danilowicza St., then Klasnienska St., then Janinska St., and then to the right up to Wieliczka-Siercza #299, and then follow the path/country road. Present town population is 5,000-25,000 with no Jews.

- Local: Urzad Miasta [City Council], 1 Powstania Warszawskiego St., Wieliczka, tel. 782105, 781294 and Urzad Miasta, Wydzial Geodezji I Architektury [City Council, Dept. of Land Survey and Architecture], 32 Limanowskiego St., tel. 782325.

- Local: Urzad Wojewodzki [Voivodship Office], Krakow, 22 Basztowa St., tel. 160200, fax 227208. Also, Urzad Wojewodski, Wydzial Spraw Spolecznych [Voivodship Office, Dept. of Social Affair], Krakow, 22 Basztowa St., tel. 226828, 223371, 160268'Inspektor d/s Stowarzyszen I Wyznan [Inspectorate for Associations and Religious Denominations] room 273, and Kongregacja Wyznania Mojzeszowego [Jewish Congregation], 2 Skawinska St., Cracow,
The Jewish cemetery was established in the first half of the 16th century. 1921 Jewish population was 1,135. The landmarked cemetery was established in the 18th century with last known Orthodox burial 1942. The Jewish community of Podgorze [1884189], 10 km. away, also used this cemetery. The isolated hillside suburban has no sign or marker. Reached by crossing private property, access is open to all with no fence, wall, or gate. The pre-WWII size was 1.92 ha; and the post-WWII cemetery size is 1.78 ha. The boundaries of the cemetery were reduced by agriculture. 20-100 stones, 1-20 in original location with 50-75% broken or toppled, date from the 18th-20th century. The granite, limestone, and sandstone finely smoothed and inscribed stones or flat stones with carved relief decoration have inscriptions Hebrew. The cemetery contains special memorial monuments to Holocaust victims and known unmarked mass graves. The municipality owns the property classified as abandoned property. The remaining property is used only as a Jewish cemetery. Adjacent property is agricultural. Rarely, private visitors stop. It was vandalized during World War II and occasionally since. Stones have been re-erected. No maintenance. Within the limits of the cemetery are no structures. Vegetation is a constant problem, disturbing graves, a serious threat. Security and vandalism are very serious threats. Weather erosion, pollution, and incompatible nearby development are slight threats. Lack of wall and gate, prolific vegetation, uncontrolled access cause frequent vandalism such as "libation," [sic] graffiti painting, etc.


[UPDATE] Photos by Charles Burns [April 2016]