

Alternate names: Osijek [Croa], Eszék [Hung], Esseg [Ger], Essegg, Osek, Osziék. [45°33' N, 18°42' E](#)

in Slavonia, E Croatia. 4th largest city in Croatia. 1900 Jewish population: about 3,000.

- *Encyclopedia of Jewish Life* (2001), p. 946: "Osijek".
- *Pinkas HaKehilot*, Yugoslavia (1988), p. 28: "Osijek"

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[town image](#) {February 2009}

[Jewish Guide to Croatia](#) [July 2014]

Osijek, the biggest town in eastern Croatia's region called Slavonia is on the Drava River near the border with Serbia. The three sections (Lower Town, Upper Town, and Fortress) merged into one city in 1786. Osijek's Jewish prosperous community was established in 1849. In the late 19th century, Osijek had the largest Jewish community in Croatia: In 1880, the 1,585 Jews were nearly 9% of Osijek's population. The area saw fierce fighting during the upheavals of the 1990s. Today's Jewish community of about 100 has its

headquarters in the former Jewish school at Radiceva. In a park across from this building has a Holocaust memorial by Oscar Nemon entitled "Mother and Child." Osijek's main synagogue designed by the architect Theodor Stern and built in 1869 on the Upper Town's main commercial street opposite the County Hall was a massive brick building with plaster facade and terracotta decoration with two towers topped by lotus domes. The synagogue, burned in 1941, was torn down in 1948-1950 to build an apartment building. A smaller synagogue built Lower Town in 1903 is a freestanding neo-Romanesque and neo-Moorish building topped by 'onion' domes that was sold by the Jewish community in 1970 to Pentecostal church. See postcard of synagogue and street. [February 2009]

There were two separate Jewish Communities in Osijek until 1941, one in the Upper Town and one in the Lower Town. Lower Town's 1903 Synagogue was sold in 1970 to a Pentecostal Church. Upper Town Synagogue at Zupanijska ulica was built in 1860 by Theodor Stern and destroyed by fire in 1941. Jewish Community that was established in 19th century still exists [1994] as one Jewish community. Jewish Population: 1925/26-2960; 1931-2516; 1937/38-3201; 1941-2011; 1947-365; 1994-120." See: Gruber, Ruth Ellen. Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to East-Central Europe. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1992. (Page 244) [1999]

Croatian town has proud Jewish history By Vlasta Kovac · September 6, 2001:"... the Jewish community of Osijek was the largest in Croatia, bigger even than Zagreb's. Now it can barely muster a minyan of 10 young people involved in the community. Still, that didn't stop Osijek's Jews from participating the annual European Day of Jewish Culture. Community facilities were opened to the general public and valuable paintings and sculptures were exhibited. Among them was the head of a young girl sculpted around 1930 by Osijek native Oscar Nemon, best known for a huge marble bust of Churchill in London, as well as a sculpture of Sigmund Freud. With hardly 100 Jews left in a city of 100,000 near the Hungarian border, Osijek's Jewish community is only a shadow of its former self. In 1880, the community had 1,585 members, and in 1910, when the area was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Osijek's Jews represented nearly 9 percent of the town's population. The Jews' social ascent occurred in less than a century. Grandparents who had been modest

manufacturers raised sons who became affluent industrialists. Their children, in turn, became doctors, lawyers, bankers, newspaper editors and artists. The Jewish community then was wealthy and influential. Many members belonged to the elite social class, living in Osijek's most beautiful avenue, which today is called European Avenue. In 1941, the community numbered 3,500. Most were deported to Auschwitz in July and August 1942. Yet a small remnant of the community survived. Darko Fischer, 63, a professor at the Osijek Electrotechnical Faculty who is president of the Jewish community, survived in Hungary, together with his mother and his sister. His father, an attorney named Alfred Fischer, was killed. "What I wish is to show the world that the Jews in Osijek still exist and that they are conscious of their heritage," Fischer said. "I am not so sure whether there is a future for us here in Osijek, because the ambitious young people - including my own son who now lives in Germany - go away in search of better lives and to pursue their own careers." "Despite the dearth of young Jews in the community, "those Jews that still live in Osijek are doing their best to preserve the tradition," Fischer said. "All of our grandchildren have been born in mixed marriages, and it will be up to them to decide which religion to choose - and we shall be more than happy if half of them choose to stay Jewish."

CEMETERIES:

Jewish Cemetery-Upper Town: Cepinska 11-13.

Started in 1850 and still active. a neo-Romanesque ceremonial hall exists in good condition. Surrounded by a fence. 500-600 gravestones have inscriptions in Hebrew, German, Hungarian, and Croatian. The condition cemetery is good; maintenance is fair. [February 2009]

Land Registry: Folder No: 4 Plot No.: 3968] Source: Srdjan Matic, MD, 40 West 95th Street, Apt. 1-B, New York, NY 10025. (212) 222-7783. [2001]

Jewish Cemetery-Lower Town:

Established in 1860, 70-100 tombs with inscriptions in Hebrew, German, and Hungarian are visible. A wire fence with a gate surrounds the overgrown and not well maintained site. The small cemetery chapel slightly damaged in the 1990s war has been repaired. [February 2009]