

# Rymanów

Ukr. РИМАНІВ, Yid. רימעניו

*Had we stayed in Europe, most probably  
I would have become a tailor.*

Isidor Isaac Rabi

## **At the crossroads of trails ¶**

Rymanów is located in the Land of Sanok on the border of two geographical regions: the Jasło–Sanok Hollows and the Low Beskid. The area where the town was set up in the early Middle Ages was part of the Principality of Galicia–Volhynia. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, after the Rurikid dynasty died out, the Land of Sanok became a bone of contention between the Kingdoms of Poland and Hungary. In 1376, Duke Władysław of Opole, the Governor of Galicia–Volhynia appointed by King Lajos (Louis) I of Hungary and Poland, established here a town chartered under Magdeburg law, giving it a name derived from his own first name, Ladislaus (which can be translated into Polish as Władysławowo). Mikołaj Reymann, a German, was appointed a borough leader (wójt), and his surname apparently suggested the town's current name, Rymanów, used in documents since 1415. ¶ The town was established at the crossroads of a trade route connecting Biecz, Krosno, Sanok with the trade route to Hungary running through Jaśliska and Carpathian mountain passes that was used for transporting goods such as wines, hides, and

honey. This location created favourable conditions for the settlement, despite the numerous disasters it suffered: fires, epidemics, Tatar, Hungarian, Swedish, and Russian incursions, as well as raids by Carpathian highland robbers.

**The Jewish community ¶** The first Jewish settlers appeared in Rymanów in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century at the latest. Initially, they came under the authority of the Lesko kahal. Tax records dated 1567 mention seven Jewish families in Rymanów and, ten years later, this number had increased to eight. The community in Rymanów became independent towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century – it is known that there was an independent kahal there from as early as 1589. At that time, the community had a wooden synagogue and a cemetery. The evidence for the existence of a synagogue in this period includes a mention in the criminal records of the town of Sanok which contains testimony given by Paweł of Sobolew, who – together with Stanisław, a miner from Bochnia – broke into the Jewish shul in Rymanów [...], *stole moveable objects, that is: a silver cup, a silver tablet, three towels.*

**Hasidic dynasties** ¶ Hasidim settled in Rymanów at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The town became an important centre thanks to tsadik **Menakhem Mendel Rymanover** (d. 1815), who settled here; he was the disciple of Elimelech of Lizhensk (Leżajsk) and Shmelke of Nikolsburg (Mikulov), the author of numerous homiletic works and a principal character in many parables written by his disciple Naftali Tzvi of Ropshitz (Ropczyce). His other disciple, Tzvi Hirsch Rymanover (d. 1847), who, as the tradition has it, performed miracles and was nicknamed Hirsch the Helpful, became the next tsaddik in 1827. He was succeeded by his son, Józef ha-Kohen Rymanover (d. 1913), the author of rabbinic response and legal commentaries. In 1913, another tsaddik moved here: Isaac Friedman, a descendant of Dov Ber of Mezeritch. During

tsaddik Tzvi Hirsch's tenure, the tsaddik's court with a private prayer room and a room for Talmudic studies was built close to the synagogue. The building was partially destroyed during World War II and finally dismantled after the war. ¶ Rabbi Menakhem Mendel together with two other famous tsaddikim – the Seer of Lublin and the Maggid from Koziénice, all were convinced that the Napoleonic wars were a sign of the coming of Messiah. Together they prayed for his military victories, and the legend has it that during the battles in which Napoleon was successful, he always saw the vision of a red-haired Jew praying for him and allegedly it was Menakhem Mendel. In his last battle of Waterloo, he did not see this vision, hence was defeated. After Napoleon's fall, the three rabbis died the same year (1815).

“*At court, when the rabbis of Apt [Opatow – eds.] and Rymanov were staying with the Seer of Lublin in the city of Lantzut where he lived before going to Lublin, his enemies denounced his guests to the authorities, who had them jailed. They decided that since Rabbi Mendel could speak the best German, and German was the language used in the court, he was to do the talking for all when they were examined. The judge asked: “What is your business?” The rabbi of Rymanov replied: “Serving the king.” “What king?” “The king over all kings.” “And why did you two strangers come to Lantzut?” “To learn greater zeal in serving, from this man here.” “And why do you wear white robes?” “It is the colour of our office.” The judge said: “I have no quarrel with this sort of people.” And he dismissed them.* ¶ M. Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, trans. Olga Marx, New York 1991.

**The synagogue** ¶ A stone synagogue with a prayer room on a square plan was built near the market square, most probably in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In its northwest corner, there is a tower – a former kahal prison for disobedient Jews. The building was partly reconstructed during a general renovation towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; it burnt down during World War

I and was rebuilt in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was then that the inside walls were covered with polychrome frescoes – only partially preserved today – by Baruch Fass. ¶ The synagogue was partly destroyed by Germans during World War II. Its women's gallery and narthex were dismantled. Dilapidated, the building was left to itself for many years. In 2005, it became the property of



the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage, which started its reconstruction in cooperation with Menachem Mendel's eighth-generation descendant, Rabbi Menachem Abraham Reich, and the Association of Rymanów Jews in New York. The building was covered with a roof, plastered on the outside, and floored; windows and doors were installed. Thanks to these works, the synagogue is again used (occasionally) for prayer purposes.

**Merchant wars** ¶ First and foremost, the Jews of Rymanów traded in commodities imported from Hungary – mainly wine and spices – and practiced low-scale money-lending. They constituted a major economic force in the town and its vicinity and also engaged in Rymanów's socio-political life. In 1698, Jan Samuel Czartoryski, the owner of the estate of which Rymanów formed part, obliged them to pay *corvée* – forced or unpaid labour – for two days during harvest time, suggesting thus that Jews should be downgraded to the level of serfs who also had to pay *corvée*. From 1569, Jews were prohibited from settling in the nearby town of Krosno; Jewish merchants from Rymanów stepped in to

fill the gap, trading at Krosno's markets and fairs. Christian merchants from Krosno did not like this and tried to get rid of the competition in various ways. When the conflict reached fever pitch, the town council of Krosno passed a resolution allowing merchants from Krosno to appropriate Jewish goods and even to kill Jews from Rymanów who traded there without facing any legal repercussions afterwards. ¶ In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, bishops of Przemyśl introduced numerous regulations pertaining to relations between Christian and Jewish communities. These, for instance, prohibited Jews from trading or even banned them from the streets on some days. Working as servants in Jewish houses was also forbidden for Christians. ¶ Tax records from 1765 reveal that the whole *kahal* of Rymanów was the third largest one in the Sanok lands in terms of the number of taxpayers (1,015 Jews in the city and the nearby towns and villages) – after Lesko and Dynów, and before Sanok, Baligród, and Dubiecko. Under Austrian rule, the Josephine reforms changed the organisation of *kahals*, forced Jews to adopt German surnames, introduced “German-Jewish” schools, and introduced new taxes. In

[A] Synagogue in Rymanów, 2015. Photo by Wioletta Wejman, digital collection of the „Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre” Centre ([www.teatrnn.pl](http://www.teatrnn.pl))

[B] The aron ha-kodesh niche and partially preserved polychromy in the synagogue in Rymanów, 2015. Photo by Emil Majuk, digital collection of the „Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre” Centre ([www.teatrnn.pl](http://www.teatrnn.pl))

1786, tax was paid in Rymanów by 708 Catholics and 330 Jews (47 percent).

**Physics ¶** Since 2005, a memorial plaque on the building of the General Secondary School in Rymanów has informed visitors that this is the town where **Isidor Isaac Rabi** (1898–1988) – a Nobel Prize Winner in physics – was born. His father, David Rabi, was a tailor from Rymanów, who emigrated to the USA a year after the birth of his son. It was in the USA that Isidor began his brilliant educational path, which was crowned in 1944 with the Nobel Prize for his research into the magnetic properties of the nuclei of atoms. After he saw an atomic explosion with his own eyes and realised the consequences of using this kind of weapon, he became an advocate of stopping the arms race and using atomic energy in peaceful ways. He was among those who initiated the establishment of CERN (Fr.: Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire) – the most important centre for research on elementary particles today, located in Geneva. In 1971, he came to visit the town where he was born and, as he said, found it as beautiful as his parents had described it.

### **The Rymanów Medical Spa**

¶ During the partition period of 1772–1795, Rymanów became part of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. After the First Partition, the Rymanów estate was acquired by Józef Ossoliński, who chose Rymanów as his residence. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the estate was taken over by the Skórski family, who lived in Rymanów in a manor house they built, around which they established a park. A great fire broke out in the town

in 1839; it caused extensive damage. In 1872, the family of Potocki, Stanisław and his wife, Anna née Działyńska, bought the lands from the Skórskis. The Potocki family contributed significantly to the development of the town: they established a school of arts and crafts (1873), but first and foremost they established the Rymanów Zdrój medical spa (1881), where they constructed a pump room, baths, and buildings for patients and also set up the Spa Park. In 1884, a railway line was built near the town.

**Interwar period ¶** In the interwar period, Rymanów prospered in many respects, including in its socio-political life. All major parties such as the Agudas Yisroel, Poalei Zion, and the Bund, craftsmen's and merchants' unions, and cultural, educational, and sports associations operated within the Jewish community. A local curiosity was that the town Roman Catholic inhabitants engaged in activities more typical of Jewish craftsmen in other places: Christians here worked as tanners, furriers, butchers, shoemakers, coppersmiths, coopers, and blacksmiths. Jews were also tailors, bakers, carpenters, metalsmiths, and glaziers, but, first and foremost, they dealt in trade, wholesale and interurban. They had stores and trading stalls and also owned most inns and taverns. What may seem surprising is that Jews produced Christian devotional objects, which they sold in villages and towns. The local brickyard also belonged to Jews. In the interwar period, Hirsch Horowitz served as the Rabbi of Rymanów (until 1934), and just before the war this post was held by Moshe Eliezer Horowitz, who was killed during the occupation.



Jewish football team from Rymanów, 1933, collection of Beit Hatfutsot, The Museum of the Jewish People, Photo Archive, Tel Aviv, courtesy of Dr. Zvi Rosen

### World War II and the Holocaust

¶ The Germans seized Rymanów on September 9, 1939. Shortly after they entered the town, repressions against civilians began, especially against the Jews. The Nazis started confiscating goods, banning trade, forcing monetary ransom, expropriating the Jewish property. Jews were forced to move to the Soviet occupation zone but many after a short time returned to the town. Some of those who remained in the USSR were soon deported to Siberia. In the spring of 1942, the Jews from Rymanów and vicinity were concentrated in a ghetto established in the northern part of the town, around the synagogue. The Germans began to liquidate the ghetto in August 1942. Some Jews were transported to the labour camp in Płaszów, others were shot in the woods near Barwinek and at the Jewish cemetery; those remaining were transported to the Bełżec death camp. ¶ The Red Army entered the town on September 20, 1944. During German-Soviet clashes over Rymanów, part of the town burnt down. After the end of the war, to the south of Rymanów, there were clashes with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. In

the mid-1940s, the Operation Vistula took place, as a result of which the Ukrainian inhabitants of southeast Poland were displaced to the USSR and to the so-called Recovered Territories (territory of the former Free City of Danzig and the parts of pre-war Germany that became part of Poland after World War II). The Potocki family estate was taken over by the communist authorities and parcelled out at the beginning of 1945 under the Agrarian Reform decree.

**The Jewish cemetery** ¶ The Jewish cemetery lies about 1 km from the town centre, on the eastern arm of the Kalwaria Hill – beyond the line of ramparts. It was established late in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and expanded in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, two ohalim were erected over the graves of the two tsadikim: the southern one over the grave of Menakhem Mendel and his wife and the northern one over the graves of Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer and Jozef Friedman. During World War I, a military section was set up in the southern part of the graveyard. In its space of 2.5 hectares, several hundred matzevot and their fragments have been preserved: one of them

probably dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and eight others to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. ¶ After it was destroyed during World War II, the ohel of Menakhem Mendel was rebuilt. In the 1980s, the cemetery was fenced, and the second ohel, Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer's and Jozef Friedman's, was also reconstructed. Today, the cemetery is administered by the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage. Hasidim from all over the world come as pilgrims to the graves of the tsaddikim. The keys to the graveyard are available in the house at 11 Kalwaria St. (tel. +48 608 832 983).

**“Meeting Rymanów” Association** ¶ Operating since 2008, the “Spotkanie Rymanów” (Meeting Rymanów) Association organises here “The Remembrance Days of the Jewish Community of Rymanów.” Every

year, former and present residents of Rymanów as well as their guests – Poles and Jews – march together along the same route which Jews from Rymanów had to walk in August 1942: from the Jewish cemetery of Rymanów to Wróblík Szlachecki. Lectures, concerts, performances, and exhibitions concerning the Jewish history of the town are also held. During the Remembrance Days in 2014, a mezuzah was ceremonially affixed to the house at 2 Sanocka St., which had been bought a few years earlier by **Malka Shakhm Doron**, a teacher from Mitzpe Ramon in Israel. The building had belonged to her grandfather before the war. She renovated it and often comes to Rymanów. One of the rooms on the ground floor was converted into a memorial chamber with photographs of old Rymanów (tel. +48 663 517 815).

**PAUL'S DIARY** ¶ Malka's mother, **Fryda Stary-Vogel**, was the granddaughter of a baker from Rymanów, Abram Stary, and his wife Haya née Szapiro. One of the things Malka received from her mother was the diary of a boy named Paul, who wrote it in the attic of the house on Sanocka Street during World War II. Paul was a cousin of the Szapiro family, and during the German occupation he came to Rymanów from Berlin together with his parents. Like the majority of Jews from Rymanów, Paul was killed at the Bełżec death camp. After the war, the diary was passed on to Fryda Stary-Vogel, who read it many times; but she had to bury it for safe-keeping when leaving Poland in the late 1940s. She later described its contents to Malka, who managed to convince her mother to write down what she remembered in Hebrew and publish it as a book of memories of the Holocaust. In 2014, the Austeria publishing house in Krakow published its Polish translation titled, *Zeszyt Paula* (Paul's Diary) which was launched during the Remembrance Days in Rymanów.

**Present day** ¶ Present-day Rymanów – and especially the nearby Rymanów Zdrój – are important centres of tourism. The town has around 2,000 residents. It has retained its medieval layout with a market square and a network

of streets leading away from it. The tourist information point is located in Rymanów Zdrój at 45 Zdrojowa St. (tel. +48 13 435 71 90).



[A] The interior of the ohel of tsaddik Menahem Mendel and his family at the Jewish graveyard in Rymanów, 2015. Photo by Emil Majuk, digital collection of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre" Centre ([www.teatrnn.pl](http://www.teatrnn.pl))

[B] Days of Remembrance of the Jewish Community in Rymanów, 2015. Photo by Bogdan Lisze

Iwonicz-Zdrój (6 km): a health resort with wooden architecture in the Polish-Swiss style, a former house of prayer located in "Leśna" villa, administered by rabbis from Rymanów and Dukla before the war. ¶ Trześniów (11 km): a manor complex: a larch wooden house (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c.), a land steward's mansion, a sheepfold, an outbuilding, and a park (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c.); the church of St. Stanislaus the Bishop (1893–1898). ¶ Haczków (12 km): the wooden Church of the Assumption of Mary (14<sup>th</sup> c.); a manor with an orangery and a chapel (17<sup>th</sup> c.). ¶ Krosno (16 km): a market square with Renaissance arcaded houses; the bishop's palace (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> c.); the parish Church of the Holy Trinity (17<sup>th</sup> c.); the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15<sup>th</sup> c.); the Capuchin monastery and the Church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> c.); the wooden Church of St. Adalbert

Surrounding  
area



(15<sup>th</sup> c.); the Jesuit monastery (1660–1667); a Jewish cemetery at Ks. Sarny St. (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c.) with a statue of Bernard Münz and the mass grave of people killed in 1942; Krosno Glassworks; the Subcarpathian Museum with a collection of kerosene lamps. ¶ **Nowotaniec** (19 km): manor house in Wola Sękowa (19<sup>th</sup> c.), fragments of earth ramparts and walls of a defensive manor (16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> c.); Church of St. Nicholas (mid-18<sup>th</sup> c.); a Jewish cemetery (19<sup>th</sup> c.). ¶ **Bukowsko** (22 km): a Jewish cemetery (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c.); the Church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, a presbytery, and wooden blacksmith's shop (circa 19<sup>th</sup> c.). ¶ **Brzozów** (24 km): The Church of the Transfiguration (1676–1686); the building of the former Gymnastic Society (1910), currently the Cultural Centre; a former missionary seminary (18<sup>th</sup> c.); tenement houses; a town hall (1896), currently the Adam Fastnacht Regional Museum; a Jewish cemetery (19<sup>th</sup> c.) on Cegłowskiego St.; Mausoleum Memorial to Brzozów Jews murdered in 1942 in Podlesie-Zdrój; an obelisk in the forest of Brzozów-Zdrój (1990). ¶ **Odrzykoń** (24 km): ruins of the Kamieniec castle (14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> c.); the Church of St. Catherine (1887). ¶ **Jasienica Rosielna** (26 km): The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1770); a Jewish cemetery (circa 19<sup>th</sup> c.) with a stone slab commemorating the Jews shot in Jasienica Rosielna, Domaradz, and Golcowa. ¶ **Korczynia** (26 km): a Jewish cemetery (circa 19<sup>th</sup> c.); the grave of 9 soldiers killed in World War I, and graves of those murdered during the Holocaust. ¶ **Zasław** (28 km): a memorial grave to the murdered victims at the site of the concentration and extermination camp. ¶ **Frysztak** (40 km): The Church of the Nativity of Mary (1924–1927); a former pharmacy, post office, and library (late 19<sup>th</sup> c.); the old Jewish cemetery on Parkowa St. (17<sup>th</sup> c.) with the grave of Esther Ethel, daughter of Elimelech of Lizhensk; the new Jewish cemetery (18<sup>th</sup> c.). ¶ **Nozdrzec** (40 km): the Skrzyński Palace (1843); “the grave of serfdom” – an obelisk commemorating the abolition of serfdom (1848); a turbine mill (1918); a ferry crossing the San River. ¶ **Strzyżów** (49 km): a synagogue on Przeclawczyka St. (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> c.) – currently a library and the Society of the Enthusiasts of the Strzyżów Land, with partially preserved polychromy (19<sup>th</sup> c.) and original doors; a Jewish cemetery on Żarnowiecka Hill (1850) with the reconstructed ohel of Rabbi Horowitz; a railway tunnel from the time of World War II; the Collegiate Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> c.); the palace complex of the Wołkowicki family (circa 19<sup>th</sup> c.), currently the Janusz Korczak Children's Home; the manor house of the Dydyński family (18<sup>th</sup> c.). ¶ **Jaślika Landscape Park**: 5 nature reserves, with routes: the history and landscape path “On the Hungarian Route” and the nature path “In the Jasiołka River Gorge.”

Worth  
seeing

**Synagogue** (17<sup>th</sup> c.) at the corner of Bieleckiego St. and Rynek St. ¶ **The Malka's Jewish House**, 2 Sanocka St., tel. +48 663517815. ¶ **Jewish cemetery** (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> c.) with approx. 800 preserved matzevot, Kalwaria St. tel. +48 608 832 983. ¶ **Old urban layout** preserved in the town centre: the market square and a partially regular network of streets radiating from it. ¶ The parish **Church of St Lawrence** (16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> c.) with a two-storey Renaissance tombstone of Jan Sieneński and his wife Zofia, dated to circa 1580, by Lvovian sculptor Herman Hutten-Czapka, 5 Wola St. ¶ **Brick mansion** (19<sup>th</sup> c.) founded by the Skórski family, currently the seat of the Forest Inspectorate in Rymanów, 38 Dworska St. ¶ **Manor park** (19<sup>th</sup> c.). ¶ **Brick tenement houses** (late 19<sup>th</sup> c. and early 20<sup>th</sup> c.), with elements of earlier buildings (17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> c.). ¶ **Wooden and brick villas** (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> c.)