

PARCZEW



MY TOWN

## MY TOWN PARCZEW



Parczew, formerly Parczów, is one of the oldest towns in the Lublin Region. It was founded in 1401 by King Władysław Jagiełło and during the reign of the Jagiellonians, the mid-forest settlement flourished at the border of Poland and Lithuania, on the trade route from Cracow to Vilnius. In Parczew, royal assemblies and noble conventions were held, Polish and Lithuanian lords met, and kings from the Jagiellonian dynasty were guests there. It was in Parczew that King Sigismund Augustus adopted the resolutions of the Council of Trent. And what is more, the Conclusion of a real Polish-Lithuanian union, known today as the Union of Lublin, was to have been accepted in the forum of the last Parczew Sejm in 1569. I hope you will enjoy reading about my hometown and its royal history.

## THE FOUNDATION OF PARCZEW



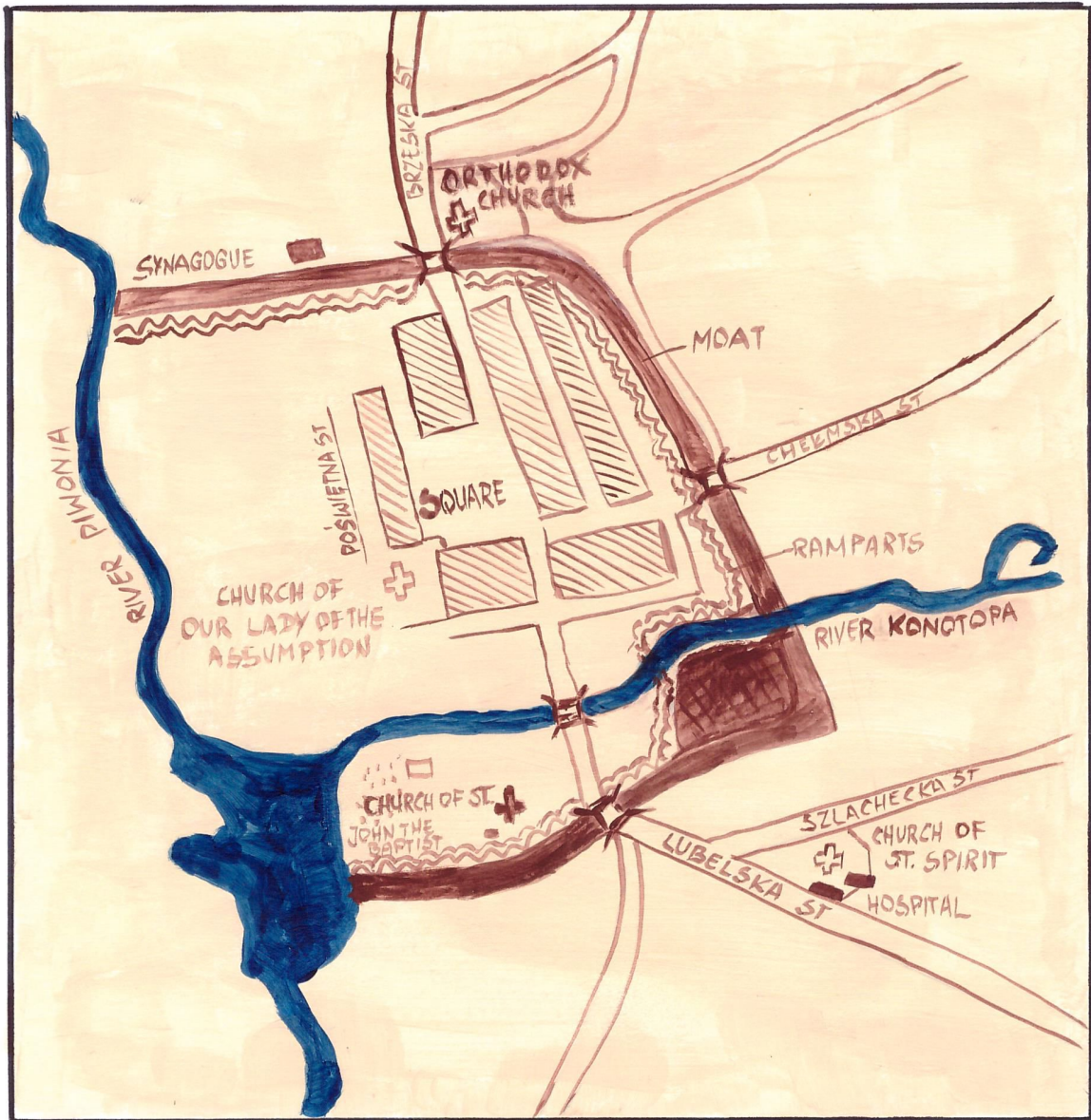
In the Middle Ages, the vicinity of Parczew was the border of the Kingdom of Poland. The year 1401 was extremely important in the history of the forest settlement. King Władysław Jagiełło drew attention to that place as a stopover during long journeys from the Crown to Lithuania. On July 3rd, the king founded the town regulated by Magdeburg law and ordered Mayor Stanislaw Samson to build a new town on one of the banks of the Konotopa River opposite the existing settlement of Old Parczów. Since then the Capital route: Cracow - Lublin - Parczew - Vilnius has been used as an international tourist route. Nowadays, it is called the "Jagiellonian Route" (Via Jagellonica).

## THE LEGEND ABOUT THE CREATION OF THE COAT OF ARMS OF PARCZEW



The Lithuanian prince Jagietto is believed to have been travelling from Brest to the Kingdom of Poland to be crowned in Cracow. It was winter time and everything was covered in snow. Unfortunately, they got lost. There were thick forests behind them and white snow plains in front of them. They seemed to be in the middle of nowhere. The only feeling they had was fear. They realized that only a miracle would save them. And the miracle happened. The ground rumbled, and a beautiful deer sprang out of the trees. He came to the prince, looked into his eyes as if he wanted to say, "follow me". Then, the deer turned around and started to run slowly through the snowy fields. Everyone was astonished, nobody said anything until the prince gave a sign to follow the deer. Soon, they saw the roofs of a settlement. It was Parczów. So, Jagietto spent his first night there. Later he ordered the image of a deer to be placed in the mayor's stamp. This is how the royal deer became the coat of arms of Parczew.

## FORMER PARCZÓW



Located a few kilometres from the Lithuanian border, Parczew was an ideal place to become a fortress. Two rivers, The Piwonia with The Royal Pond and The Konotopa, protected the town from the north and from the west. From the other sides, Parczew was surrounded by a moat filled with water. The outer ramparts were built around the town. In the centre, there was Market Square, with a Town Hall. Not far from Market Square (former Lubelska Street, which is Warszawska Street today) there were a parish church, stables and the royal castle.

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH



After the fire, which burnt down entire Parczew in 1566, King Sigismund Augustus decided not to rebuild his castle, but to build a new church. It took nine years to finish the building. Unfortunately, the church was burnt down again during the Cossack raid in 1649. Some years later St. John the Baptist Church was rebuilt again. A wooden belfry with two bells, which still exists today, was built next to the temple. The church served parishioners for over 100 years. It wasn't renovated. It was decided to build a new parish church far from the centre at Chełmska Street, now Kościelna Street. The third church was erected but it burned down in 1918 during the German occupation.

## THE MINOR BASILICA



A magnificent, red brick, neo-gothic temple was built and consecrated in 1919 after World War I. Our Minor Basilica is famous because the 400th anniversary of the resolutions of the Council of Trent took place in Parczew. The most honorable guests were Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland and Karol Wojtyła, the Archbishop of Cracow, who was to become the Pope John Paul II in 1976. In 1968, a painting of the Mother of God with the Child was solemnly placed in the main altar of the church. In this way, the parish became a Marian Sanctuary. In 1989 it was proclaimed by the Pope as Minor Basilica. Later on, in 2008, Bishop Siedlecki raised the profile of the parish church and today it is the Diocesan Sanctuary of Our Lady, Queen of Families.

## THE WOODEN BELFRY



It is interesting to know that the Belfry, which had been moved from Market Square to Kościelna Street next to the church in 1805, was the only wooden building which withstood the fire of 1918. It is 347 years old and it is considered to be the oldest building in Parczew. There you can admire a chasuble, sewn by Elizabeth of Habsburg, King Sigismund Augustus's wife. It dates back to the 19th century and it is the property of the minor basilica.



## MARKET SQUARE IN PARCZEW - JEWISH STALLS



The period of the greatest prosperity of Parczew started in the year 1541. The first mentions of Jews in the royal town come from that year. From the beginning of the settlement, the dominant occupation of the Jewish population was trade and crafts. Whereas, Polish burghers dealt with agriculture. The life of the entire city and its people was concentrated in the Market Square and its vicinity. The market was the central point of trade and service. There were basic municipal institutions, a horse market, a cattle market and a slaughterhouse. At the end of the 16th century the city lost its economic importance and became one of the many royal towns of the Lublin Province. The "Swedish deluge" and "Russian deluge" almost led to the destruction of the city.

## MIKVAH AND SYNAGOGUE



In 1826, Jews constituted to a total Parczew population, exceeding half of the total Parczew population in 1835. Two communities. Polish and Jewish, were able to find common ground based on respect and tolerance, in Parczew despite huge cultural differences. The Jewish population on Piwonia Street had a Synagogue, a bathhouse (mikvah) and several Jewish schools. After World War II, mikvah was rebuilt into a cinema. Currently, it is the Wedding House. In 1943, the Synagogue was devastated. In 1957, its facade and interior was rebuilt. After the renovation, there was: a sewing room, a clothing discount, and a furniture store. Currently, the synagogue is abandoned. Unfortunately, due to the wooden buildings, few Jewish houses have survived to this day. Therefore, Parczew and its surroundings do not have many monuments.

## JAGIELLONIAN FAIRS



Due to town's location by trade routes, the city was granted the privilege to store the Russian salt which was transported to Podlasie and Lithuania. The most important, however, was Gościniec Królewski, which transported skins, furs, tallow and wax to fairs in Lublin. There also were fairs held in Parczew on fixed dates. Nowadays, Parczew is one of the first organizers of contemporary, annual Jagiellonian fairs in the Lublin province. The annual event has been a great promotion of traditional arts, crafts and local products for several decades.

## THE MARKET HALL



In 1911, 14 slaughterhouses were built on the Market Square, now Freedom Square. Unfortunately, they had to be liquidated because of their poor technical condition and sanitary problems. Thus, the construction of a market hall in the Market Square was started. In 1938, the building was erected. Inside the one-story building, there were 33 shops, 23 of which were owned by the Jews. Until today, the hall in Parczew has retained its former character and purpose. In spite of the fact that its present look is slightly different from the original one, it still serves the residents.

## THE RAILWAY STATION (AROUND 1898)



At the end of the 19th century, Parczew was a typical, provincial town on the outskirts of the Włodawa County of the Lublin Province. It was surrounded by large forests and swamps. The houses and other buildings were made of wood. Only two of them were made of brick. The roads also were in poor condition, so it was very difficult to travel in those days. So, we can say that the construction of the Lublin - Łuków railway line with a stop in Parczew in the years 1894-1898 contributed a lot to the development of the town. Moreover, the railway station in Parczew has a rich history. It "hosted" the German-Austrian army during the WWI, it was a strategy goal for the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1920. The trains with the supplies for the Polish Army stopped there in September 1939. Later on, it served German military transport. Unfortunately, from there the Jews were brought to concentration camps. It was also the target for guerrillas' actions during the WWII as well as for anti-communist independence troops.

## THE GLASS FACTORY



Parczew and its surroundings have never been highly industrialized. The only large industrial plant in and around Parczew was a glass factory, opened in 1922 on the site of the former starch factory. It produced windows, bottles and pharmacy glass in the interwar period. Some of the products were exported. The glass factory functions until today.

## REGAINING INDEPENDENCE



In August 1915, Lublin Region was invaded by the German and Austro-Hungarian troops. The hostilities led to enormous damage due to the "scorched earth" tactic used by the retreating tsarist army, which burnt everything that could not have been deduced. The German occupation turned out to be no better. But Parczew managed to regain its independence. In November 1918, sixteen Scouts disarmed the German soldiers. Significant amounts of weapons and food were seized at the main German post (a brick building of the former school at Wojska Polskiego Street) It turned out, however, that apart from 27 disarmed soldiers, 6 Germans were also present in the second post at the Market Square (a two-storey tenement house opposite the market hall). There was a run-in between the Germans and the Scouts near the Konotopa bridge. Two Scouts were killed. The Germans surrendered and at 10.00 Parczew was free. The monument commemorating these events is located at Wojska Polskiego Street.

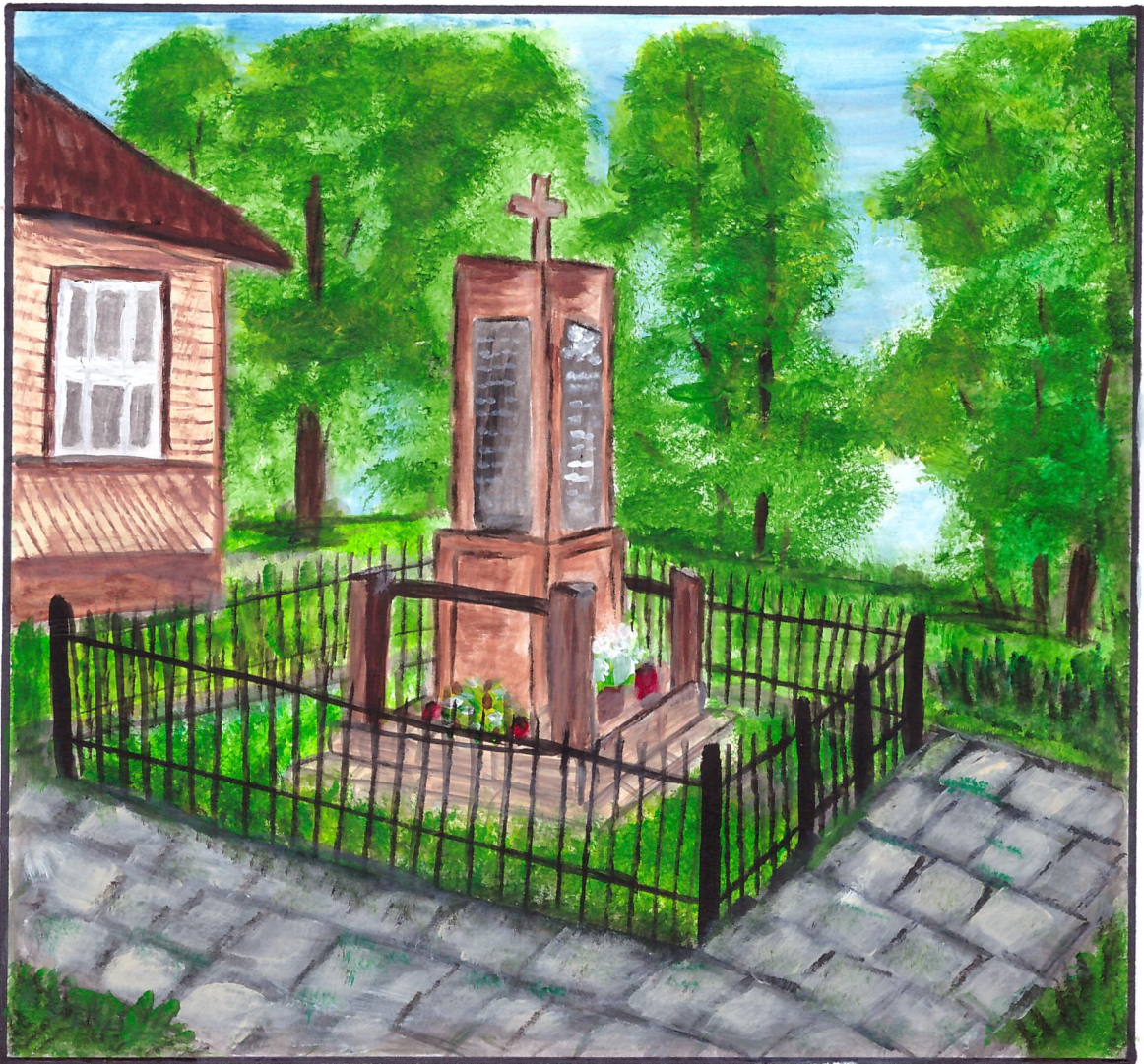
## GHETTO AND "BAZAAR"



The first persecution of the Jewish population of Parczew during the German occupation in 1939-1945 took place on November 20, 1939. In September 1940, in Parczew, in the area of Szeroka Street and Bóznicza Street (from the Market Square to the Piwonia River), the Germans created a ghetto. In August 1942, the elimination of the ghetto in Parczew began, during which over 5,500 Jews were brought to the concentration camp in Treblinka, and over 2,300 people were killed. Some Jews managed to escape the repressions. They hid themselves in the nearby forests. The Jews built the camp in the depths of the forest on the swamps in 1942. They called it the "Bazaar". In the winter of 1942/1943, there were over 2,000 refugees in the camp and it was the largest forest camp of the Jewish population in the General Government.



## PARCZEW – A CITY, RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS



The German authorities issued a decree that any Pole who would shelter a Jew or help them in any other way would be sentenced to death. This tragic fate befell the inhabitants of the village of Biatka. On December 7th, 1942, the Germans killed 96 people of the village because not only did they supply the Jews with medicines, clothes and food, but also hid them in their own houses and farms. In order to commemorate the heroism of the citizens, a monument was erected in the village Biatka in their honor. One of the citizens of Parczew even got the title "Righteous Among the Nations" for helping the Jews to escape. There were a lot of people who risked their lives providing the Jews with documents, employing them or hiding their children in the basements.

## THE PARCZEW FORESTS



The Parczew Forests consist of mixed-wood forest. You can admire aspens, oaks, birches, alders, birches, fir trees, pines and some other trees there. Elks, deers, foxes, hares, wolves, boars, roe deers make their homes there. Forest matrix also provide important habitat for birds. The Parczew forests are under protection of the Łęczyńskie Lakeland Landscape Park and the Polesie National Park, which are parts of the western Polesie International Biosphere Preserve. The Parczew Forests are a great tourist attraction as there are a lot of educational and natural paths leading through the Obradowskie Lake Preserve, Bobrówka. There are also numerous marked bicycle routes built through the forests. Amateurs of active leisure time as well as nature lovers will not be disappointed if they decide to come to Parczew region.